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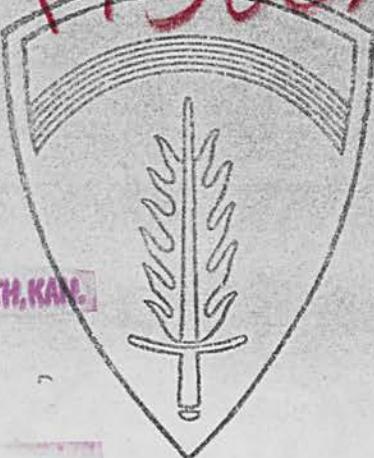
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FIFTH PANZER ARMY

(ARDENNES OFFENSIVE)

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FIFTH PANZER ARMY

(ARDENNES OFFENSIVE PREPARATIONS)

D.D. (16 Dec - 25 Feb 45),

By

Hasse von Manteuffel, General der Panzer a.D.

U.S. Army Military History Institute

Historical Division
HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES ARMY, EUROPE

Preliminary Remarks

1. Authentic records, as for instance war diaries, orders, documents, etc. were not at my disposal. The reports of the commanding officers (the commanding generals and div commanders) cannot be looked upon as authoritative. As a body of evidence they only count as statements concerning dates and troops, as the commanders emphasize what they themselves and the troops subordinate to them have personally met with, without discussing the cohesive chain of events. As a rule the commanders did not know more than was necessary for the carrying out of their missions. In the first place, the reports can serve as a help to establish a true picture of the development of events.

On the other hand, the work of Professor Schramm, Ph.D. is a valuable work - within the limits pointed out by himself in the foreward.

2. Concerning the direction of the artillery in the area of the Army I refer to the detailed report by Genlt Metz, Higher Artillery Commander 309, who gives an exhaustive and pertinent description of the activity of this arm during the preparation and the carrying through of the offensive; I have only given the operational conduct of battle of the artillery. The report of Genlt Metz is very valuable and is to be preferred to all other reports written by artillery

commanders, as he utilizes his own experiences gathered during his own service among the troops - a service in which he has taken a lively, personal part.

3. An evaluation of my total experience in warfare has been set down in the work requested of me: "Collected Thoughts on the Consequences of War Experience on Strength, Organization (Composition), Arming, and Equipment of Troops on the Battlefield." (Dated 30.4.46 Plus Additions of 1.9.46). It is to be read in conjunction with the subsequent work.

4. With regard to the expressions used herein, such as "fast mobile troops," "armored troops," "tank weapon" the following is meant:

"Fast mobile troops" comprised in peacetime the tank divisions - the motorized infantry divisions - the armored reconnaissance battalions - and the cavalry regiments.

After the war in Poland the term "fast mobile troops" was changed to "armored troops." Consequently, when the term "tank weapon" is used, only tank regiments and independent tank battalions are alluded to.

v. Manteuffel

Allendorf,

former General of the

September 1946.

Armored Forces and Com-

mander in Chief of the

5 Pz Army.

Abbreviations

A.C.K.	Armee-Oberkommando	Army High Command
A.H.Qu.	Armee-Hauptquartier	Army Headquarters
Abt.	Abteilung	battalion
Am.	amerikanisch	American
Art.oder Artil.	Artillerie	artillery
auschl.	ausschliesslich	exclusive
Batl. Batlne.	Bataillon, Bataillone	battalion, battalions
bezw.	beziehungsweise	respectively, or
Brig.	Brigade	brigade
Brit.	britisch	British
d.h.	das heisst	i.e.
Div.	Division	division
einschl.	einschliesslich	inclusive
Ers. Abt.	Ersatz-Abteilung	replacement battalion
ff.	folgende	the following
F.H.Qu.	Fuehrer-Haupt-Quartier	Fuehrer Headquarters
Flivo	Flieger-Verbindungs-Offizier	air-corps liaison officer
F.E.B.	Feldersatz-Bataillon	field replacement battalion
F.M.	Feldmarschall	Field Marshal
Gen.Kom.	General-Kommando	corps general staff
Gen.Lt.	Generalleutnant	Major General
Gen.Maj.	Generalmajor	Brigadier General

Gef.Feld	Gefechtsfeld	battlefield
Gef.St.	Gefechtsstand	command post
Gen.St.(i.G.)	Generalstab(im General- stab)	General Staff (of the General Staff)
gep.	gepanzert	armored
H.Gr.	Heeresgruppe	army group
Kdr.	Kommandeur	commander
Komd.Gen.	Kommändierender General	Commanding General
milit.	militäerisch	military
O.B.	Oberbefehlshaber	Commander in Chief
Ob.West	" West	Commander in Chief in the West
O.K.W.	Oberkommando der Wehrmacht	High Command of the Wehrmacht
ostw.	ostwaerts	eastward
Pz.	Panzer	armored, tank
Pz.Gren.	Panzer-Grenadier	Panzer-Grenadier
Pz.Tr.	Panzertruppe	armored troops
Rgt.	Regiment	regiment
Sa.	Summa	in all
sudl.	suedlich	south
St.Gesch.	Sturm-Geschuetz	assault gun
usw, w.a.	und so weiter, und andere (s)	etc., and others
V.G.D.	Volks-Grenadier Division	Volks-Grenadier Division
W(N O S)	Westen (Norden, Osten, Sueden)	West (North, East, South).

W.F.St. (WFST)	Wehrmachtfuehrungs-Stab	operations staff of the Wehrmacht.
westl.	westlich	west
z.T.	zum Teil	partly
Inf.	Infanterie	infantry
Art.	Artillerie	artillery
Pion.	Pioniere	engineers
11 ⁰⁰	11 Uhr	1100 hours

C O N T E N T S

The 5 Pz Army and the German Offensive in the Ardennes
(16 Dec 1944 - 25 Jan 1945).

The High Command of the 5 Pz Army.Former Mission.

The staff of the 5 Pz Army received this designation on the 1 Aug 1944. In its essence (also with regard to its personnel left) it had its origin in the "Pz Group West," which was established as operations staff in charge of all counterattacks launched by the German Pz divisions under the Commander in Chief in the West during the invasion. In this capacity the "Pz Group West" (under Gen Pz von Geyer) was sent in under the command of the 7 Army, after the start of the invasion; however it was crippled by an air attack that destroyed its headquarters. On the 9 June 1944. The remnants of the staff were extracted, reconstituted, and again employed in the area le Havre - Paris on the 28 June 1944. Its sector was located between those of the 15 and 1 Armies, and again it was under the command of the 7 Army. The subordination to the 7 Army ceased at the end of July, the "Pz Group West" was made independent. This is the reason for the change of name as mentioned above.

At the beginning of July Gen Pz v. Geyr had been replaced by Gen Pz Eberbach, who, in his turn, gave up his command of the 5 Pz Army to SS-Oberstgruppenfuehrer Dietrich on 8.8. owing to the formation of the "Pz Group Eberbach."

On the 30 Aug 1944 a part of the staff was taken prisoner. The fragments left were brought up to strength by means of the staff of the 7 Army, which relieved the staff of the 5 Army of the chain of command in the northern France area on the 5 Sept 1944.

The staff of the 5 Pz Army was transferred to Alsace, where it was subordinated to the "G" Army Group, commanded by Gen Obst Blaskowitz. On the 11 Sept 1944 in the afternoon Gen Pz von Manteuffel, the newly appointed Commander in Chief of the Army, arrived at the Army Staff Headquarters at Hochwald, 45 km southwest of Strassbourg. Formerly he had been Commander of the 7 Pz Div, and lately Commander of the Pz Gren Div "Gross-Deutschland," the strongest Pz Div of the German Army with regard to strength and arming. On the 5 and 10 September Hitler had personally instructed him concerning the activity in the area west of the Vosges and especially as to the tasks assigned to the 5 Pz Army.

The tank attacks planned at this date in conjunction with the engagements of the "G" Army Group (cf. also 11, 1) for which the staff of the Army had been withdrawn from northern France and transferred to Alsace, where for some days it had been ready for a new mission, could not be carried through, owing to the unfavorable development of the situation in the sector of this group. The tasks assigned to Gen von Manteuffel in the Fuehrer-Headquarters were

therefore altered thus wise that he was to push forward from the area south of Saarburg east of the Maas in the direction of Luneville - Nancy - Montmedy so that in a flexible conduct of battle with tank units we could relieve Metz, and prevent the American forces from advancing on Strasbourg through the Saarburg depression. At the same time a contact was to be re-established with the 1 Army, adjoining to the right, which had been pushed back with its southern wing on the elevated terrain in the vicinity of Chateau-Salins.

Before the concentration of the troops destined for the attack mentioned above was concluded, the development of the situation in the sector of the "G" Army Group compelled us to throw in all forces to prevent the breakthrough threatening. Consequently, about the 15 Sept, the Staff of the High Command of the 5 Pz Army was inserted between the 1 Army (to the right) and the 19 Army (to the left) and took over a sector with the following lines of demarcation: to the right, Dieuze - Nancy, to the left, Bruyeres (30 km west of Epinal) - Epinal. Luneville was temporarily recaptured, and the possession of the wood at Parroy and the elevated terrain in the vicinity of Marsul - Xanrey - Coincourt was maintained despite a strong enemy pressure; further the road Luneville - Dieuze was blocked for a long time by combat activity and close communications with the 1 Army

were established.

On the 15 Oct the Staff of the Army was withdrawn from the "G" Army Group and its former sector west of the Vosges was divided between the 1 and the 19 Armies. The Staff of the Army was subordinated to the "B" Army Group, which was under the command of Field Marshal Model. To the Army C-in-C in the Headquarters of the Army Group south of Krefeld he disclosed that Hitler had ordered him to commit his forces in the sector in the vicinity of Aachen where the center of gravity of enemy attack was located, since despite a temporary lull in combat activity there it was with certainty to be expected that the enemy would continue his efforts to push through to the Rhine across the Roer river - through the terrain between the river Roer and the river Erft, so suitable for massed tank attacks. Hitler wanted to feel sure that he had an experienced tank leader for the armored forces destined to intervene there.

After having read the work "The Preparations for the German Offensive in the Ardennes (Sept - 16 Dec 1944)," written by Professor P.E.Schramm, Ph.D., keeper of the War Journal of the Operations Staff of the Wehrmacht, I believe that the above mentioned reason for the bringing up of the Army Staff to this sector of the western front was a contributory one but that the decisive one, however, was to keep the staff in the neighborhood of the base of attack

envisioned for the offensive intended in the Ardennes and under the command of Field Marshal Model, who was to lead the attack. So the two leaders were able to establish an intimate contact with each other. As it was very usual in defense combat to throw in a staff in the center of gravity we were very successful in the veiling of our real intention.

Consequently on the 22 Oct, the Staff of the 5 Pz Army was inserted between the 1 Parachute Army (under Gen Obst Student) and the 7 Army (under Gen Pz Brandenberger) in the area between Maasbracht (30 km southwest of Roermond) - Dueren - Stolberg - Aachen, and stayed there until the 23 Nov 1944. The Army Headquarters was located at Koenigshoven, 15 km east of Juelich.

After the fall of Aachen on the 21 Oct the combat activity decreased in this sector, but from the 16 Nov it increased violently between Geilenkirchen and the wood of Huertgen along almost the entire front of the Army (cf. also 11, 1). For this reason the withdrawing of the Army Staff, foreseen to take place in the middle of November, was delayed. It took place finally on the 23 November. For reasons of camouflage the withdrawal was carried out by sections. On that very day the Operations Staff moved to Manscheid (Eifel), a place selected by the staff itself, in order to be able to devote all its energy to the preparations for the offensive

planned. The G3 (Obst Lt Neckelmann of the General Staff) had already been sent there two weeks before. The combat sector alongside and west of the river Roer was given up to the 15. Army (under Gen Inf von Zangen), but for reasons of camouflage and deception it was still called "the Staff of the 5 Pz Army" (sometimes also "Staff Manteuffel") until the beginning of the offensive on the 16 December. (During the time of preparation the Staff of the 5 Pz Army was called "Feldjaeger-Kommando z.b.V." - Cf. also III 4).

II.

1. A Brief Survey of the Development of the Operative Situation in the West 1944 after the Successful Breakthrough of British American Forces from Normandy through France to the East as far as the German Frontier.

When - owing to the breakthrough at Avranches 25.7.44 - the Allies had succeeded in pushing forward from the narrow peninsula of Normandy into vast and thinly occupied France to the East the highly developed mobility of the Allied leadership and troops first fully proved its efficiency in the open terrain.

With this the initiative was taken from the German military leadership: now it was up to the enemy freely to choose when and where he wished to attack in order to insure his superiority in men and material at any point of the front

line, also on the ground. Everywhere he could launch feint attacks to have the few German reserves move into a false direction, through southern France, harassed by French partisans and via railroads more or less destroyed.

On the German side neither positions nor reserves were available to stop the motorized forces of the Allies for any length of time. Forced into mobile warfare, the few reserves - partly motorized but most of them almost non-mobile - tried to offer resistance, using delaying action fighting. They were overtaken, a thing made easy to the enemy because of the excellent road system and the enemy air force having complete command of the air. New breakthroughs and overtaking thrusts compelled us again and again to give way in order to renew our endeavors to establish a resistance along an improvised line.

No armored or motorized divisions were available in reserve to the Commander in Chief in the West either, as the elite of his armored forces were encircled in the pocket of Falaise and almost annihilated. These losses could not be compensated for in a short spell of time. The remnants were not numerous enough for counterattacks on an operative scale. On the 30 Aug the Commander in Chief in the West reported that he still had 11 reinforced regimental groups left of the armored and motorized divisions stationed in

the area of the "B" Army Group. As each of them was equipped with 5 - 10 tanks the total sum was about 100. The few infantry divisions were newly activated units equipped with horse-drawn artillery; they almost completely lacked combat experience.

The withdrawal of the entire "G" Army Group (the 1 and the 19 Armies) from southwestern and southern France had again been consented to by Hitler at the last moment, and consequently too late. At this time American armored spearheads had already reached the Lower Loire, and threatened the withdrawal of both armies. Suffering very heavy losses, the 1 Army (comprising only three weak divisions) fought its way back through Southern France from the Bay of Biscay to Orleans, all the time harassed by partisans. At Orleans the road across the Loire was blocked, and therefore the Army moved in the direction of Bourges and the Plateau de Langres. The weak forces of the 19 Army fought their way back in the direction of Dijon, from the south and east hard pressed by American and free French forces. On both sides of the Rhone its flanks were attacked by partisans, and in the north they were threatened in the rear by American units.

Although the Commander in Chief in the West already in August reported that the only thing left to do was to improve the positions of the West Wall at any price and to transfer all German forces to same, Hitler rejected such

suggestions, and at the end of August he ordered the Commander in Chief in the West to attack from the area Chaumont - Chatillon sur Seine - Langres to the northwest between the Marne and the Seine with the objective of thrusting into the deep flank of the American forces. In addition, the aim of the attack was to prevent a disturbance of the retreat movements of the "G" Army Group (Armeegruppe), fighting its way back from southern and southwestern France, as its forces were absolutely necessary to the newly activated "G" Group of Armies (Heeresgruppe) for the establishing of a line of defense resting on the Swiss frontier. This attack could not be carried out as the British forces had passed through Amiens and the Americans had captured Verdun. With this the Somme - Marne - Saone position had been broken through. The forces envisaged for the thrust were now urgently needed for the defense.

On the 2 Sept the Commander in Chief in the West was ordered to concentrate an attack group in the vicinity of Dijon, under the command of the Staff of the High Command of the 5 Pz Army with the objective of thrusting into the deep flank and rear of the American and French forces advancing on Metz. But the attack depended on the 19 Army's holding the possession of this area. The bringing up, from Germany, of the three Pz brigades of the reserves of the

High Command of the Wehrmacht and the concentration of the Pz and Pz Gren Divisions put at our disposal by the Commander in Chief in the West was considerably delayed owing to the disastrous situation on the railroads and in the air. The advance of the enemy alongside the Swiss Jura on Chalon sur Saone, Besancon and Beaune compelled us to withdraw our forces to the line Langres - Gray. A very narrow bridgehead at Dijon was to render the covering of the last elements of the "G" Army Group possible. Owing to the narrowing down of the area the concentration of the forces of the 5 Pz Army envisaged for the attack had to take place in the area round Epinal. The American crossing of the Moselle southwest of Luneville, the fall of Charmes (situated halfway between Nancy - Epinal) and Vescoul (on the 12 Sept) in conjunction with the increasing pressure on Epinal compelled us to throw in portions of the forces destined for the attack. With the breakthrough at Chateau Salins the Americans reached Lorraine on the 13 September. After the withdrawal of the 19 Army to the line Charmes - Epinal - Belfort only the area east of the Moselle could be taken into consideration as a starting point for a thrust by the 5 Pz Army into the flank of the enemy. But the fall of Nancy and Luneville frustrated this plan too.

For the 5 Pz Army the altered situation involved the necessity of attacking east of the Moselle the flank of the

enemy advancing east. This attack and the battles for the elevated terrain at Moyenvic east of Nancy, it is true, brought local success and among other things closed the gap to the 1 Army, but it could not decisively alter the overall situation in the western theater of war. The right flank of the American spearhead had no weak points; on the contrary, it was so strong that the task of preventing a breakthrough eclipsed all other intentions, also those of the "G" Group of Armies (Heeresgruppe G). In order to save our forces, the attack of the 5 Pz Army was stopped, and the entire "G" Group of Armies withdrawn to the Vosges. The Americans having crossed the Moselle south of Metz in the middle of September, heavy engagements developed in the combat area of this Group of Armies at Womency and in the wood of Parroy (both east of Lunéville). In November Metz and Strasbourg fell; southern Alsace was lost.

In the area of the "B" Group of Armies (Heeresgruppe B), in the northern part of the front, British forces 4 September captured Antwerp. The 15 Army, put into a difficult position, was compelled to limit its efforts to the blocking of the Schelde Estuary, and thus render the use of the harbor of Antwerpen impossible, or at least difficult. According to the opinion of Hitler and the Operations Section of the Wehrmacht the first usable harbor had now fallen into the hands of the Allies. Now it would be possible for them to

land new forces and bring up supplies via the shortest way to the combat area in the vicinity of the German frontier, and this to such a degree that the immense numerical and material superiority would be fully brought to bear within a short spell of time.

The situation on the eastern front did not allow us to transfer any considerable number of reserves to the West, as the Red Army was likewise engaged in a full-scale attack on Germany.

Very well equipped with regard to men and material, under the protection of an air force in the proportion 1:25, and no doubt having excellent leaders, the highly motorized Allied Armies thus succeeded in pushing rapidly through France to the East in the direction of the German frontier.

The 7 and the 1 Armies fought their way back to the West Wall. There was a danger that the enemy would break through at Aachen, which since the 17 Sept had been under fire from his artillery.

Thanks to the steadfastness of the troops the German leadership succeeded in intercepting the enemy and establishing an oblique front line which for weeks resisted all attacks. Exerting all our efforts we finally succeeded in establishing a protective wall on the western frontier of Germany. As its wings rested on natural obstacles and in the middle on the West Wall the defense was facilitated.

It also made the enemy carefully prepare for his future operations.

Aachen fell on the 21 Sept. We had to reckon with a continuation of the fighting in this combat area.

At this moment, when both sides made their preparations for the battle of the West Wall - according to Schramm after the fall of Antwerp at the end of September - "the idea of an attack on an operative scale, launched - after a thorough reconstitution of the Army and careful preparations - from the West Wall positions on some weak point of the front line of the enemy had already so far taken form that the Eifel front was chosen as the area of attack and Antwerp as the objective." (Schramm).

The origin of the plan of such an offensive is described trenchantly and in detail by Schramm on page 41 and after.

The month of September had taught us that the local attacks, launched in various forms, never carried successes which would lead to an offensive on an operative scale: the initiative was nowhere regained. With the forces at our disposal it was (in the West) impossible to achieve more than a closing of the gaps in the front, at many points softened up. After a breakthrough of the positions of the enemy the front, therefore, was to be put in motion with the help of tank forces in order to achieve in the "open field" a definite change in the situation in this theater

of war or even in the fortune of the war.

"Based on statements available, concerning the forces of the enemy and the amount of men and material which Germany could put at the disposal of the western front, Hitler thought it still possible to bring about a change. What was impossible in front of the West Wall, must be possible to achieve through an attack starting from same . . . Further, to the old axiom that the attack is the best defense could be added the experience that an attack leading to warfare in open terrain is less costly than defense." (Schramm)

It is not the task set the author of the present work to define in detail his attitude to the ideas on the origin of the offensive and, further, it would go beyond the limits set for the composition. But to me it seems important to point out that Schramm, who gives a detailed description of the individual phases of the planning and preparing of the offensive, nowhere shows any ideas revealing a connection with a possible political solution (an ending to the war), all Germany's endeavors to achieve a military victory having so far been without success.

2. The Purpose and Objective of the Offensive Planned, Described According to the Intentions of the High Command of the Wehrmacht.

On the 2 Dec 1944 the purpose and objective of the offensive were thoroughly explained by Hitler to a small circle of

military leaders, among them the author of the present work, assembled in the Fuehrer Headquarters (located in the Reich's Chancellory in Berlin), in a conference lasting several hours. Cf. also II.1.p.80 and after). On the occasion of the issuance of orders to the generals concerned the explanation was repeated on the 11 Dec in the Fuehrer Headquarters at Ziegenberg (Cf. also III.1.p.90 and after).

As Schramm has given a thorough description of the contemplation of a German counteroffensive and the various phases of the development up to the completion of the plan of attack, carried out by the Operations Staff of the Wehrmacht, here only follows - concerning the purpose and objective of the attack - what the present writer remembers from the conferences mentioned and his first issuance of instructions on the 2 November (Cf. also p.36 and after).

What Hitler said . . . I give the gist of it . . . was:

In the western theater of war the month of September has taught us that the repeated attacks with a limited objective, launched as thrusts into the flanks of the enemy, only carried local successes. The attacks have, indeed, been able to relieve the western front of pressure at certain points, but they have nowhere and at no time given possibilities of an operative change of the war. Through the month of October the Wehrmacht had been forced everywhere to defense warfare.

The offensive now ordered is to force the breakthrough of a position with the purpose of gaining the "open terrain" - this term used in the sense of German command regulations. As the forces available only permit us to start an offensive at a point where a breakthrough is sure to be achieved only a sector can be taken into consideration in which the enemy has stationed fewer forces - both "in position" and in reserve. - but, which on the other hand, must be such that a successful breakthrough can be broadened to such an extent that the overall situation on the western front will be changed in favor of Germany. The result of these considerations is the fixing of the Eifel front as the area of attack."

The Highest Command considered the sector between Monschau and Echternacht as most suitable for an attempt at a breakthrough as the enemy troops holding it were weak. Because of the thin occupation of the front and the fact that the enemy would not expect German attacks - if any at all - in this terrain, we could here, sooner than anywhere else reckon with a rapid breakthrough by our forces if the attack were kept a complete secret and the weather were unfavorable to the air force of the enemy. "With this, freedom of movement is achieved for the tank units, which then in a quick thrust are to establish bridgeheads across the Maas between Liege and Namur with the objective

of a further uninterrupted advance in the direction of the northeast, east past Brussels, to Antwerp."

We supposed that the attack of the tank units after the crossing of the Maas would cut off the rear lines (the roads of supply) of the First American Army, probably located in the Valley of the Maas. As soon as we reached the vicinity of Brussels - Antwerp the rear lines of the 21 British Group of Armies would also be decisively jeopardized and - if Antwerp were captured - they would be cut off too. "At present Antwerp is the only completely working harbor which till now has fallen into the hands of the Allies." If this objective were reached the conditions for an attack from all directions on the First American Army and the 21 British Group of Armies, cut off from their supplies, would be given. With this 25 - 30 divisions would be annihilated and the successful attack must further "lead to the destruction or capture of enormous amounts of material of all kind, which ordinarily - and especially now considering the imminent Allied offensive against the West Wall - were stored in the area cut off."

Further - according to Hitler - a successful offensive on this operative scale must at any rate thwart the plans of the Allied for a long time and confront the Allied leadership with decisions which had to be agreed upon by the political leaders (Roosevelt and Churchill). This might

lead to a fatal postponement of the necessary counter-measures to be taken by the military leadership. Hitler even went so far as to suppose "that because of the failures differences of opinion would develop among the military leaders and even among the political leaders of America and England. These differences would be further aggravated as Canada would keep out of the war for a rather long time owing to the fact that the majority of her forces would have been annihilated in the pocket."

On the 2 Dec Hitler said among other things "that the distant objective Antwerp was a risky enterprise and there seemed to be a certain disproportion between it and our troops and their condition. But nevertheless he would put all his eggs in one basket because Germany needed a breathing space." In my opinion the mentioning of "the disproportion between our forces and the objective" - by the way only mentioned once by Hitler as far as I know - was made with conscious emphasis as a reply to Field Marshal Model's suggestion for a so-called "small solution" (see III.1.p.51). To me it seems worthy of notice that Hitler himself probably had some doubts as to the objective, after we had been compelled to reduce the troops envisaged in the original plan.

He expected that even a partial success would delay the carrying out of the plans of the enemy for 8 - 10 weeks,

which he thought would result in the necessary breathing space for Germany.

"With this the situation on the western front would be stabilized for the time being and the Highest Command would be able to withdraw forces and transfer them to the jeopardized sectors of the eastern front."

Hitler had a very high estimate of the strong psychological effect of such a success on German leadership, homeland and the front and also on public opinion of the Allied countries and their armies.

According to Schramm Hitler signed the orders for the concentration of troops and the moving into position on the 10 November. Because of the connection with the above I already include here some extracts of the order. The beginning of the orders said:

"The objective of the operation is to achieve a change of the whole Campaign in the West and with this perhaps of the whole war by annihilating the enemy forces north of the line Antwerp - Brussels - Luxemburg." Hitler declared, "It is my firm resolution to insist, at any price, on the carrying out of the operation even if the attack of the enemy on both sides of Metz and the coming assault on the Ruhr District should result in great losses of terrain and positions."

It would go beyond the limits set for this work if the author were to state his attitude to Hitler's military and political statements.

The original text of the orders for the attack and all other orders given by the High Command of the Wehrmacht, the Commander in Chief West, and the B Group of Armies are not at my disposal any more than orders and proposals of the Army are. The following statements are therefore based on the work of Schramm and on what I am able to recall.

On the 1 Nov the Operations Staff of the Wehrmacht for the first time informed in writing the Commander in Chief in the West and the Commander in Chief of the B Army Group about the leading ideas of the Highest Command. Previously, on the 28 Oct, Hitler had personally instructed the Chiefs of the General Staffs of the two Commanders in Chief mentioned above. On the 2 Nov the Commanders in Chief of the 5 and 6 Pz Armies had their instructions. (See also III.1.p.36).

Until the four Commanders in Chief mentioned got their instructions on the 2 Nov the directives of the Operations Staff of the Wehrmacht covered:

1. Purpose and objective of the offensive, see above.

2. Missions:

a. The 6 Pz Army was to rush forward on the crossings of the Maas on both sides of Liege and on the Vesare river (a tributary of the Maas) and build a strong line of defense

in the eastern fortified positions of Liege in order to gain, first of all, the Albert Canal between Maastricht and Antwerp and the area north of Antwerp.

b. The 5 Pz Army was to cross the Maas between Amey and Namur and along the line Antwerp - Brussels - Namur - Dinant and prevent the activity of the reserves of the enemy from the West against the rear of the 6 Pz Army.

c. The 7 Pz Army was assigned the task of covering the flank to the south and southwest with the objective first of all of reaching the Maas and the Semois and in the area east of Luxemburg establishing a contact with the Moselle front and by means of demolitions gain time to build up a strong line of defense further back in the rear.

d. Further the Highest Command disclosed its intention of launching a secondary thrust in connection with the main attack in the Ardennes. It was to be launched by the "H" Army Group from the bridgehead west of the Roer river, starting from the sector of the XII SS Corps between Sittard and Geilenkirchen as soon as the enemy began to throw strong forces against the flank protection to be established by the 6 Pz Army.

In a letter from the Chief of the Operations Staff of the Wehrmacht he pointed out to the Commander in Chief in the West what was to be considered unchangeable in the plan of attack: the distant objective, the organization taken as

a whole, and the broad jump-off line.

3. Point of attack: ensued from the purpose and objective of the offensive in connection with an estimate of the situation of the enemy. The lines of demarcation are to be deduced from the strips of attack or movement assigned to the armies.

The width of the front of attack is accounted for by the fact that the wider the front the smaller the immediate threat to the flank at the root of the area of the breakthrough and especially to so important points as for instance the take-off points of the military highways. Therefore an extension of the front of attack to the south was necessary in order to eliminate the protruding bulge of the Sauer sector at Echternach - Wasserbillig by the very first attack. Because there was grave danger in that the enemy had the possibility of crossing the Sauer river and thus blocking the advance of the 7 Army by a thrust into the rear.

4. Estimate of forces:

a. To the right: the 6 Pz Army with four SS Pz Divisions for the assault and five Inf Divisions for the covering of the right flank. Total: Nine large units.

b. in the middle: the 5 Pz Army with four Pz Divisions for the assault and three Inf. Divs. for the covering of the left flank. Total: Seven large combined-arms units.

c. To the left: the 7 Army with six Inf. Divisions for the protection of the left flank of the 5 Pz Army. One Pz Division as possible reserve. Total 6 - 7 large combined arms units.

d. secondary thrust: by the H Army Group, later on the sector of the 15 Army: no estimate of forces yet made.

e. reserves: available to the Highest Command about three Pz Divisions. 3 - 4 Inf. Divisions.

Total: about 28 - 30 large combined-arms units.

5. Employment of the forces:

a. To the right the 6 Pz Army had the 15 Army, contained by the British-American attack at Aachen - Dueren. Until the crossing of the Maas it was responsible for the protection of its own right flank. Left neighbor was the 5 Pz Army, likewise attacking, to the right in the sector: Schleiden § Monschau - Hohes Venn - Verviers - Liege - Tongres - Hasselt - Albert Canal. To the left: Pruem - Vielsalm - Huy.

West of the Maas the line of demarcation was open to the right; to the left it was intentionally not fixed as the development of the situation was to decide here.

b. The 5 Pz. Army was situated between the 6 Pz. Army and the 7 Army in the sector:

to the right: Pruem - Vielsalm - Huy.

to the left: Neuerburg - Wiltz - south

of Bastogne - St. Hubert - Rochefort - Namur - east of Brussels.

c. The 7 Army was situated between the 5 Pz Army and the 1 Army in the sector.

to the right: see the left line of demarcation of the 5 Pz Army to the left: according to the resistance of the enemy, the nature of the terrain, and the forces available, but in any case located as far south, southwest, and west as possible, at least as far as the line: Diekirch - Neufchateau - Givet.

6. General Principles for the method of attack.

The carrying out of the breakthrough:

The breakthrough along the entire front of attack was to be carried out by the static divisions. For this purpose they had to form combat groups, which were to tear up the front of the enemy. For their support they had assault guns and the fire power of all kinds of guns and in addition smoke-shell mortars. When gaps were opened they had to run the Pz units through, and then turn aside and attack the remaining enemy in the flank and rear to annihilate him completely so that finally the road was open along the entire front.

The armies themselves were to select points suitable for attempts at a breakthrough. The same was true of the points of crossing the Our river, to be gained by the 5 Pz

Army.

Thus the following missions had to be carried out for the attack: The 6 Pz Army is to move forward with one corps (two Pz Divisions) in front and one corps (two Pz Divisions) as the second wave, advance through the gaps, opened by the infantry, as fast as possible to the Maas, establish bridgeheads. Then the second wave is to move forward, and, after having received fresh supplies, both corps are to launch the attack on Antwerp. At the same time the army had to protect its own right flank and for this purpose build a line of resistance along the general line: Monschau - Verviers - Liege.

Likewise the 5 Pz Army is to move forward with one corps (two Pz Divisions) in front and one corps (two Pz Divisons) as the second wave, push through the gaps, opened by the infantry, to the Maas, build bridgeheads in the sector Huy - Namur. Then the second wave is likewise to move forward, and after having received supplies both corps are to continue the attack in the direction of Antwerp. In the course of this movement the Army had to build a line of resistance east of Brussels, pointing to the west, for its own protection and that of the 6 Pz Army. We had to endeavor not to employ our allotted army divisions before this phase of the operation, not let them get used up being contained by covering purposes east of the river.

For both Pz Armies it was of the utmost importance not to get stopped in their advance to the Maas. Consequently they had to go around strongly defended villages and positions, which could not be taken at once, and proceed despite open flanks. The task of capturing these villages and positions and of repulsing counterattacks, expected to come, had to be taken over by the infantry divisions so that the Pz Corps might reach the Maas as speedily and with as small losses as possible. With a view of capturing the Maas bridges undamaged the corps had to form advance detachments, commanded by officers particularly suitable for such surprise operations.

The 7 Army was to capture the Our sector, turn off to the southwest, capture the Sauer sector and establish a line of defense, pointing to the south and covering the 5 Pz Army. The exact course of this line was to be decided by the extent of the counterpressure of the enemy and the nature of the terrain. In case of a critical situation the Army was to have one Pz Division assigned to it.

As to the clock time of the start of the attack Gen Krebs, at the conference on the 2 November (see also detailed description of the conference, section III, 1, p. 37), announced as directives given by Hitler that it would depend on the fire preparation of the artillery, smoke-shell mortars, antiaircraft guns employed in fighting on the ground, and other

supporting weapons, as well as on the possible employment of the Luftwaffe, subject to the weather conditions.

As the opening of the fire - "this whole enormous fire power" - would of course disclose the entire operation all three armies had to open fire at exactly the same time. Also not until the opening of the fire of the artillery were formations of the Luftwaffe to be permitted to cross the Rhine in the direction of the west.

By a fire preparation lasting about two hours, and under circumstances in closest cooperation with the Luftwaffe, the artillery was to clear the passage for the assault detachments. The Highest Command would supply the artillery, etc. with such an amount of ammunition that they would be in a position to attain a thorough effect. Out of consideration of the visibility conditions for observation, carried out by the artillery and the Luftwaffe, the attack would then have to be launched some time between 1030 and 1100 hrs.

Without any doubt the start of the attack - the fire preparation and the moving forward of the infantry - had to take place at the same time along the entire front line in order not to uncover the operation prematurely by measures taken by one army which might here or there be to the purpose and consequently justifiable. I had my misgivings as to the fire preparation as such and the duration of it, and I also doubted - with regard to the consumption of ammunition,

visibility conditions, the nature of the terrain and its protection, and last, but not least, with regard to our own estimate of the enemy - if it would achieve the effect expected by the High Command of the Wehrmacht. I did not at all reckon with possible support given by the Luftwaffe, as a period of bad weather was a condition for the attack.

I had my own opinion as to the clock time of the attack: my attitude to this problem and Hitler's decision, which had a decisive influence on the operations plan of the Army, have been fully discussed in paragraph III.1. "The Operations Plan of the Army." (see also p.61).

The problem, repeatedly broached by me, whether parachute units should be employed in order to capture the bridges across the Maas undamaged and keep them open, Hitler decided in the negative - and to my opinion he was quite right - as he did not think that the Luftwaffe would be able to carry out the operation successfully. Furthermore, as bad weather was a condition for the attack it was a matter of course that the dropping of parachutists would be next to impossible.

7. Clock time of the attack.

In Hitler's instructions the 28 Oct to the chiefs of the General Staffs of the Commander in Chief in the west and the "B" Army Group, both of the latter pointed out that the 25 Nov, which had been told them to be the day of the

attack, was too early. Otherwise this day was favorable with regard to the moonlight. There would be a new moon, and consequently the lack of moonlight would give a further protection to our concentration of troops, especially against the night reconnaissance of the enemy air force.

8. Concentration of troops for the action.

The main idea was to carry out the bringing up of the troops and initial supplies in such a way that the reinforcements arriving would be pretended to be operational reserves, to be thrown in in case of a breakthrough towards the Rhein in the Aachen area, and their presence thus sufficiently accounted for. Above all, the units arriving (the 6 Pz Army, Volks Gren Divisions, Volks Artillery Corps and rocket projector brigades) were all to be concentrated behind the western front with two points of gravity, that they might also be of use to the defense in case of a critical situation on the front.

a. The majority of the reserves was placed in the area on the left side of the Rhine behind the inner wings of the 1 Parachute Army and the 15 Army.

b. One Pz Corps with 2 - 3 Pz units of the "G" Group of Armies was concentrated in the area Traben - Trabach - Trier - St Wendel - Kaiserslautern. In addition two new Volks Gren Divisions were to be brought up to this group.

From the same motives supplies of ammunition, fuel, signal and engineer equipment brought up to particularly threatened sectors of the front remained as reserves belonging to the High Command of the Wehrmacht.

The preparations for these measures of defense were likewise to be made only by a very small circle of experts. They were known under the pseudonym "Wacht am Rhein." (see also paragraph III.4 Measures for secrecy, etc.).

So much about the written statement of the leading ideas of the High Command of the Wehrmacht as they were transmitted to the Commander in Chief of the West and the Commander in Chief of the "B" Group of Armies on the 1 November. With this they, and from the 2 Nov the Army Commanders, were put in authority for the first time.

3. Starting position of the "B" Group of Armies.

(The essentials of this paragraph were taken from Schramm's work).

In an estimate which the Commander in Chief in the West submitted to the Operations staff of the Wehrmacht on the 2 November - on the day when the Chiefs of the "B" Group of Armies and the 5 and 6 Pz Armies got their instructions about the plan of the offensive - he calculated that at the time 1/4 of the 80 large combined-arms units of the enemy was employed in action: the main strength thus was still in process of marching up and for them everything available

was first being brought up. The strongest increase was ascertained to take place in the vicinity of Metz. Compared to this the increase of the forces in the combat area around Aachen and on the Roer river was smaller, but the forces were here concentrated in narrower area. The Commander in Chief in the West, therefore, reckoned with a new attack on the Rhine, launched by American forces supported by the British group of Armies. The Commander in Chief in the West did not consider the bulk of the British forces ready for action at this time. He supposed that the British Group of Armies would not attack to the north, but this time to the east, and turn off to the southeast in order to join the American forces on the Lower Rhine. In connection with this he took into consideration the possibility of a renewed dropping of air landing troops west of the line Duisburg - Duesseldorf, or even for the purpose of forcing a Rhein crossing. The Commander in Chief in the West expected the attack to start during the first half of November. This was also the reason why the Staff of the 5 Pz Army, assigned here, remained in command in this sector where the point of gravity was expected to be. It remained an open question whether the enemy would attack earlier at Metz than at Aachen. The Commander in Chief in the West also considered it possible that the enemy would attack simultaneously at all three points of gravity Metz - Aachen - the central

course of the Maas.

As it could be foreseen already at this time that the battle of the Schelde Estuary would soon be lost, the troops fighting here were withdrawn by sections to the river, and on the 9 Nov we evacuated the bridgehead at Moerdijk. As it was unlikely that the enemy would launch further attacks in this extremely difficult terrain, Hitler - on the 17 November - consented to a releasing of forces in Holland in order to build up reserves and gain forces for other fronts.

On the front held by the "B" Group of Armies fighting during the first two weeks of November was limited to local but very tenacious and, for both sides, costly attacks east of Aachen between Wuerselen and Stolberg. No doubt the American forces intended to broaden the gap they had previously knocked in the West Wall at Vossenack, 25 km southeast of Aachen, in order to capture the two dams along the Roer and the Urft. If we opened these dams on the German side the water level would change further down the valley in a way that would render our crossing the Roer and its marshy banks a difficult task, in the face of an enemy who had erected an extensive system of positions east of the same. The intentions of broadening the gap in the West Wall were frustrated by counterassaults and counterattacks. But we could with certainty expect the attacks to be renewed soon in the very same place and with the same intensity.

The large-scale attack was indeed started on the 16 November, and during the three days following it spread to the entire sector Geilenkirchen - Eschweiler - Stolberg. Eschweiler, stoutly defended by the fine 12 Volks Gren Div in conjunction with the oft-proved 3 Pz Gren Div, was lost on the 22 November. But the continuity of the front was maintained. Farther north the troops on both sides fought with the same tenacity for every inch of ground. But here too the American forces advanced slowly on the Roer, pushing our troops back. On the 5 Dec the battle seemed to decrease in the sector. But from the old gap at Vossenack the enemy launched a successful secondary thrust, and from the 8 Dec the battle developed again in the main sector. On the 11 Dec we occupied the Roer line between Juelich and Dueren; west of Dueren we still held a small bridgehead. The situation at Vossenack and in the elevated terrain adjoining on both sides remained extremely critical.

In the middle of December the result of this third battle of Aachen, lasting for more than one month, can be summed up as follows.

The gain of ground of the American forces in the tactical area was keenly felt by the "B" Group of Armies, because the enemy had here pushed his front further into the low plain of the Rhineland, had partly occupied the hills, commanding the Roer position and the terrain as far as the Erft river,

and had advanced further on Cologne. But on the whole the development of the battle can be regarded as a success, because the main objective - the breakthrough - was not achieved. First of all the Roer was an obstacle, not so easy to jump, particularly because the opening of the dams and the continuous rain had rendered the terrain extremely marshy, a fact which was now a great help to the defenders, and for the same reason the enemy was not able fully to develop his superiority with regard to tanks. But both sides had suffered heavy losses. In the case of the enemy such was the case because we were able to ascertain the bringing up of one new combined-arms unit after the other in or behind his front, and the shrinking of his operative reserves. "In connection with the offensive planned this development was very welcome, because as long as the enemy High Command was considered to have strong reserves available we had to reckon with fast, strong counterattacks of unpredictable origin. Now the battle on the Roer - together with combat in the southern part of the western front - contained already so many forces that the unknown quantity "x," calculated rather high at the start by German leadership, had already diminished considerably, and great surprises by reserves brought up from the rear need no longer to be provided for. In view of the fact that further divisions were arriving from the states the operational reserves were set up with only 3 - 6 large

units." (Schramm p. 172).

Another advantage resulting from this development was that the enemy committed several divisions (the 2, 4 and 28 divisions), which had been badly mauled in the battle on the Roer, in the very sector envisaged for our attack. This was bound to improve our possibility of achieving a success, and - according to Schramm - the Operations Staff of the Wehrmacht" considered it an indication of the enemy's temporary lack of forces."

But on the other hand German forces were severely strained to pay for this favorable development.

As early as on the 21 Nov the Commander in Chief in the West reported that defensive combat in the Aachen area was depleting considerably the forces of the "B" Group of Armies. Two, perhaps even three, Volks Gren Divisions, were drawn into the battle, and the 12 VGD, selected by Hitler himself to cover the right flank of the 6 Pz Army, could not be extracted. For the duration of the battle four fast mobile units - all of them envisaged for the offensive, namely, the 9 and 116 Pz Divisions, the 3 and 15 Pz Gren Divisions - would be contained. Considering the development of the situation of the "G" Group of Armies, on the 21 Nov the Commander in Chief in the West took it for granted that four Volks Gren Divisions and nine fast mobile units would be unavailable for the time being as reserves and drew the conclusion that the

forces left were not sufficient to ensure a success of the attack planned.

According to Schramm "this picture is too pessimistic, as, after all, three Volks Gren Divisions and four fast mobile units of those mentioned - that is to say the majority - took part in the offensive. On the other hand it must be earnestly considered that they only got a very short time - or no time at all - for freshening up and refitting, and consequently they had to be thrown in with a diminished fighting power." Schramm then makes the following estimate. "If the defensive combat along the Roer river is seen in connection with the preparation for the offensive in the Ardennes, this combat was by far its most difficult phase." This is correct in every respect.

According to Schramm the result of the battle on the Roer, which influenced the strategy and the forces of the entire "B" Group of Armies, was: "That our own forces were diminished, individual divisions were rendered useless for the attack, and others were only inadequately freshened up, consequently our initial estimate of forces for the offensive could not be maintained. But the operational reserve of the enemy, at the end of September still so considerable, had melted away to a large extent, and his units employed in or behind the front could be considered as exhausted as the German ones."

I will later on state my attitude to this.

The effect of this battle on material allotted for the offensive is a special question. During the offensive combat we resorted to the ammunition and fuel reserves, stored for the offensive, but the full amount was restored; in this respect the offensive was not influenced by the defensive battle on the Roer. But of course on the other hand the allotments of weapons and equipment of the attacking units were subjected to extensive wear and tear caused by the battle, lasting for weeks.

On the 25 Nov the final decision on the objectives and extent of the offensive was taken as a result of the estimate of the enemy as Hitler and the Operations Staff of the Wehrmacht saw matters. The instructions said (I give what is of interest in this connection) among other things: "Since the start of the defensive battle the enemy picture has confirmed our conditions for the attack. The wear and tear on the enemy forces is considerable, the majority of enemy reserves are tied up near the front, or they are already affected. His supply difficulties are increasing. The front of the gap as before is thinly occupied. Despite the unwelcome containing of certain of our own troops the Fuehrer nevertheless maintains steadfastly the objective and extent of the attack planned. Further, he sharply rejects the idea of a "small solution."¹

¹ Note: The definition of this term follows in III.1.pp.51.

III

The Army's Plan

1. Operational Plan of the Army. Preparation Period.

"The breakthrough has to be achieved as soon as possible, and with this the freedom of movement for our Pz units, further, in a quick thrust bridgeheads have to be established across the Maas between Liege and Namur, and then a thrust must be launched to the northeast, east of Brussels and beyond it, in order to reach Antwerp. . . .

The 5 Pz Army moves forward with one corps (two Pz Divisions) and one corps (two Pz Divisions) in the second wave, a breakthrough is to be achieved as far as the Maas, this river is to be crossed between Amay and Namur, and along the line Antwerp - Brussels - Namur - Dinant the activity of the enemy reserves from the west in the rear of the 6 Pz Division is to be prevented."

(Extract from the written statement of the leading ideas and objectives of the offensive as it was submitted from the High Command of the Wehrmacht together with a letter from the Chief of the Operations Section of the Wehrmacht to the Commander in Chief in the West and the Commander of the "B" Group of Armies on the 1 November).

The first instructions were given to the Chief of the Army on the 2 November in the Staff Headquarters of the "B" Group

of Armies.

It was announced moreover that Field Marshal v. Rundstedt and his Chief of the General Staff would be present "to discuss the development of the situation with the Commanders of the Armies." For this reason the Commanders of the 1 Parachute Army, the 6 Pz Army, and the 7 and 15 Armies were present too. At the end of the conference the Commanders of the "B" Group of Armies, the 5, and the 6 Pz Armies were ushered into the office of Field Marshal Model to Field Marshal v. Rundstedt, where the Chief of his General Staff first of all demanded a written statement to the effect that orders had been received from the Chief of the High Command of the Wehrmacht. He demanded strictest secrecy regarding the discussion and threatened capital punishment if it were broken.

After an introductory speech by Field Marshal v. Rundstedt, Gen Krebs, Chief of the General Staff of the "B" Group of Armies, announced the extent and date of an attack, to be started from the area of the "B" Group of Armies towards the end of November. During the speech I was astounded to hear that the High Command of the Wehrmacht had issued very detailed orders, based on conditions of the actual fulfilling of which in regard to extent, kind, and date - in my opinion - everything depended, but the fulfillment of which could not be taken for granted - according

to my knowledge of the facts. Likewise it surprised me that after the speech of Gen Krebs Field Marshal v. Rundstedt called on me as the first to state my attitude. This is explained by the fact that some days before Field Marshal Model had got his instructions through his Chief of Staff. For, together with the Chief of the Staff of the Commander in Chief in the West Gen Krebs had received his orders from Hitler in the Fuehrer Headquarters on the 28 October, and before the conference the Field Marshals v. Rundstedt and Model had conferred with the aid of the foregoing written orders received from the High Command of the Wehrmacht (accompanied by a letter from the Chief of the Operations Staff of the Wehrmacht, see p. 36) on the 1 November.

Of course it was not possible to take a thoroughgoing position towards an operation on this scale without having sufficient details. I gave the following answer, based on my knowledge of the enemy and the organization of his forces and reserves, thoroughly explained by Gen Krebs, and, further, on my knowledge of the fighting qualities of our own forces (in general), and what I knew of the terrain to be taken, though I was not well acquainted with the combat area, as I had not taken part in the Campaign in the west: "Only on condition that the following 'promises' are fulfilled could I make my forces strong enough to reach the Maas and establish

bridgeheads on the opposite bank." I wanted it understood that I thought it possible on the following conditions:

a. Local and temporary superiority in the air above the combat area, the supply bases, and the roads of supply from the day of the attack, and the period following, as soon as the bad weather period - a condition for the beginning of the offensive - had changed into weather conditions permitting the full employment of the air force of the enemy.

b. The units promised had to be available at full strength, freshened up, and in time.

c. The mobility of the fast mobile units, the advanced detachments of all divisions, the artillery, the antiaircraft artillery, and the bridge-building equipment of all kinds had to be definitely improved.

d. The assignment of forces, also to the 7 Army, was not to be altered, considering the fine roads available to the enemy leading in and out of the combat area in which I expected the greatest threat to my army, namely, the district of the Champagne.

e. The supply of arms and ammunition, signal equipment, fuel, spare parts, etc., had to be "in the hands of the Army" at the start of the attack.

As to the clock time of the start of the attack I was unable to give my opinion until after having got an idea of

the behaviour of the enemy, the fighting qualities of our own troops ,and the terrain.

The 10 Dec I considered the earliest date of attack possible. The Commander in Chief in the West did not state his attitude towards this. During the speech of his Chief of Staff, fluently and convincingly delivered in his own characteristic way, Model seemed to me to have his doubts. The Commander of the 6 Pz Army did not give his opinion at all.

After the end of the conference Field Marshal Model let me know that "that he wanted to discuss the whole matter with me once more." This second conference took place in the afternoon of the 2 November in the presence of Gen Krebs.

During the conference Model said by way of introduction that on the whole he agreed with me in what I had told Field Marshal v. Rundstedt in the morning, and he called on me to explain in detail how I came to the conclusion "only to reach the Maas and establish bridgeheads on the opposite bank."

My doubts as to the plan of an attack on this operative scale were the following . . . I arrange them according to their importance and urgency:

I was not at all able to imagine how the announced "conditions for the attack," by Krebs repeatedly mentioned

as "promises," could be available in time, at the right place, and up to strength. I considered the fulfilment of these promises decisive. They concern:

1. the participating units, their condition and fighting qualities.
2. The assignment of forces to the 5 Pz Army and the 7 Army.
3. The punctual arrival, by the beginning of the attack, of the units described as reserves in the hands of the Highest Command, so that the attack could be reinforced from the depth.
4. The prompt and priority delivery of motor vehicles (from the factories and repair shops, or given up by other units, the Organization Todt etc.) for equipping fast mobile troops, advanced detachments, artillery, antiaircraft, bridge-building equipment of all kinds and engineer forces.
5. The pinning down of the fronts not attacked to as large an extent as possible, that is to say, at many spots with the greatest effect.
6. The safe bringing up of adequate supply, above all ammunition and fuel.
7. An effective support given by the Luftwaffe.

I came to these conclusions on the basis of the following reflexions:

Re "1": I had a detailed knowledge of the condition of our troops - taken as a whole, some of the units promised I did not know. This knowledge did not only concern the Pz troops, which, if they had been employed in the western theater of war, had often been subordinate to me during the past months, but also the fighting power (numerical and material) of the infantry, artillery, engineer units, antiaircraft artillery, and the condition and efficiency of the troops of supply. With the exception of the new Volks Gren Divisions, the majority of the units promised the Army had been uninterruptedly employed on the western front for weeks or even for months, consequently a complete refitting with regard to men and material under adequate training provisions were the conditions for a successful employment.

But time is necessary for a such refitting. I had my doubts if adequate time were available, as in a short time we would certainly have to reckon with the continuation of the large-scale enemy offensive in the entire sector from Sittard - Geilenkirchen as far as Monschau. This defensive battle would require all forces of the Group of Armies, a great part of whom were destined in the plans of the High Command of the Wehrmacht to take part in the attack, namely the 12, 340, and 560 Volks Gren Divisions, the 3, 15, and 25 Pz Gren Divisions, the 9, 11, 21, and 116 Pz Divisions, the 10 SS Pz Division and the 17 SS Pz Gren Division. Further

it was doubtful whether or when these divisions would be available, and if they would be adequately reorganized as demanded by an attack on this scale.

Not until the battle started would it be possible to decide if the new Volks Gren Divisions could meet the requirements of the unusually difficult conditions, having a weaker infantry than the former divisions and as they were to be employed for the first time in the coming offensive.

Re "2": The less time available for the complete refitting, and for giving the units the most comprehensive training, that is, in the cooperation of all arms on the battlefield, the more it had to be stressed that no change could be permitted to take place in the assignment of the forces promised. This referred both to the forces of the assault armies and to the number of units envisaged for the 7 Army.

Concerning the estimate of our own forces this had to be brought into harmony with the distant objective and the probable wear and tear which every attack on this scale causes, and which must be greater during this phase of the war than at the beginning, because the condition of the troops, vehicles, horses, Pz and other equipment, spare parts, supply, etc. no longer meet all requirements with regard to quality and efficiency. Further the wear and

tear increased because of the difficult terrain and the influence of the weather, the season being advanced.

My experiences from my service in the eastern theater of war impressively taught this.

Considering my estimate of the enemy, his manner of acting, and his numerical and material forces I was of opinion that the four Pz divisions provided, envisaged with 100 tanks each, only under very favorable conditions would be able to continue the attack successfully after having reached the Maas and established expanded bridgeheads.

Among other things I considered the following to be favorable conditions:

that the 6 Pz Army would have reached and crossed the Maas at the same time,

that my own Army would not meet strong resistance on its way to the Maas and thus avoid heavy losses in men and material, and

that we would not need to give up rather strong forces for secondary tasks.

But this last presupposed that the adjoining armies would be fairly equal to us in their tasks, and especially that the 7 Army would be able to undertake the full securing of my long, left flank.

For this reason I was not in favor of deducting any forces from the assignment to the 7 Army, and wanted it

provided with a fast mobile unit, able actually and effectively to cover the long southern flank of the 5 Pz Army until its infantry, following, would be able to reinforce the securing.

Re "3": With a view to the fact that it did not seem possible completely to reconstitute the first and the second waves, the bringing up of the reserves of the Highest Command in the promised numbers was urgently desired, so that we could reinforce the attack from the depth.

Re "4": Field Marshal Model was sufficiently acquainted with the condition of mobility of the mentioned units, which needed immediate priority, freshening up. Motor vehicles of all kinds, especially the heavy prime movers of the artillery, antiaircraft artillery, and the engineer units were no longer at all able to meet the requirements of the difficult terrain in winter weather. Salvage and maintenance service for Pz troops was most inadequately equipped. Sweeping measures were urgently and decisively required in order to achieve a success.

Re "5": It was necessary to tie up the adjoining sectors in order to prevent the enemy from transferring troops from them to the attacked ones, and to deceive him: the stronger the actual effort and deception the more successful the result. The containing would pin down the forces in

the positions and the enemy reserves for several days, and perhaps so long that our attack would have reached and crossed the Maas.

Re "6": An adequate and absolutely safeguarded supply, particularly of ammunition and fuel, and a provident, continuous and prompt bringing up did not only concern the movements of the Pz troops, being the carriers of the breakthrough, but all possibility for "operating" depended on it, the motorized units of all kinds and their auxiliary weapons being the tools of the operation, as for instance: Pz and Pz Gren Divisions, advance detachments of all kinds, artillery smoke battalions, antiaircraft units, etc. Only if an adequate and prompt supply was sure to arrive would the Commander in Chief be able to operate as the development of the situation demanded. Otherwise the forming of points of gravity, the maneuverability on the battlefield in manifold and fluctuating situations, the covering of deep and open flanks would be utterly impossible, facing a highly motorized enemy.

I did not consider the prompt and provident bringing up of supply "guaranteed" unless the troops and the leadership had the supplies "in their hands" at the start of the attack. I stressed this strongly in order to compel the Highest Command to make adequate additional supply columns

available with a view of making the bringing up of supply as independent of the railroads as possible, the repair of which would certainly take a long time - also in this respect I had my experience.

Re "7": In case a period of bad weather did not set in, or did not last, our gaining superiority in the air above the combat area as far as the Rhine was the condition for a successful carrying out and continuation of the attack. The demand for the Luftwaffe convinced everybody who had fought in the west during the past months. It is unnecessary here to comment on this.

The above-mentioned considerations brought me to the following conclusion at the end of my discourse:

The condition for the entire operation is that the gap must be opened successfully and speedily. As a period of bad weather was a prerequisite for the start of the offensive, it must be further considered that the difficulties brought about by the terrain, weather, and season would affect well equipped troops in quite another way than badly equipped ones. Allowing for losses caused by this, and by the ensuing battles (dropping out and delays on the march, the greatly increased strain on men, horses, and equipment, heavy losses, etc.), I calculated the wear and tear to be felt already when we reached the Maas. Consequently at this point the attack had in any case to be reinforced from the

depth. But it was impossible to learn with what forces this was to be brought about. The critical situation on all fronts made me doubt whether this reinforcement would be any good.

This normal wear and tear on divisions and units will occur just the same if the operation is speedily carried out, but, apart from losses in men, the effect will be twice as great, or even greater, since the time for returning knocked-out tanks, armored vehicles of all kinds, guns, bridge-building equipment, etc., to the troops will be the longer the speedier the moving forward takes place.

I drew the conclusion that our forces would not be sufficient for the successful continuation of the attack across the Maas, if not sooner, where we had to expect strong enemy forces.

As any operation is influenced by the number of forces, and the time allotted for the concentration of the troops and the carrying out of the operation, the result of the above mentioned considerations must be supplemented by a computation of the time probably needed for the breakthrough to the Maas and the crossing of same. I computed the time needed to amount to 3×24 hours after our troops had moved across the Our river (this actually occurred on the 16 Dec at 1600 hrs), taking into consideration the maneuverability of the troops in the winter season, and during the period

of bad weather presupposed for the attack. I rejected all other computations, repeatedly referring to the above mentioned considerations because certain notions of time cannot be set aside. Accordingly the spearheads of the attack advance detachments or armored spearheads could be expected on the Maas about the 19 Dec and, if conditions were favorable, with bridgeheads across the river. But, on the other hand, at this point we would have to reckon with the first, strong resistance of the enemy. In this case it was urgently desirous that the advance detachments beyond the Maas be reinforced.

First of all, I did not expect any enemy activity east of the Maas from the north, as I believed that the 6 Pz Army would be about in a line with us. As no enemy reserves worth the mentioning were expected behind the static divisions, there was a chance that after our breakthrough to the Maas only weak forces would confront us, if we managed to penetrate the area before enemy reserves were brought up. But I reckoned much more with a strong enemy activity from the south. These reserves might either arrive from the zone of operations in the district of Champagne through Reims - Chalons - Charleville - Sedan - Montmedy or from the southern sector of the western front (Third American Army) through Nancy - Metz - Luxemburg - Arlon. In any case,

if their intervention was to take place east of the Maas then their movements with strong elements or the majority pointed to Bastogne, in which town the first forces would be able to arrive on the evening of the third day of the attack. We supposed that only portions would be sent in on both sides of the road Luxemburg - Diekirch to cover the northern flank of their own army (the Third American Army) and Luxemburg, and that the majority would be moved forward via the line Arlon - Neufchateau in order to attack the southern flank of our wedge of attack.

The Highest Command was inclined to suppose that the enemy would rather attempt to meet the attack head-on, instead of harassing the flank of it, that is to say that the resistance proper could be expected on and behind the Maas (Schramm p. 245). Fine roads, great maneuverability and adequate supplies to my opinion favored a speedy intervention of the reserves. Consequently, by this time, and until the intervention of the reserves, the 7 Army had to have completed an effective covering of the bulge westward protruding, caused by the breakthrough. I did not consider its forces and tank weapons sufficient for this task, neither were they mobile enough, consequently the 5 Pz Army had to take care of the covering of its own left flank, behind which all its roads of supply were situated.

I was of the opinion that Antwerp, the objective, was too distant for the forces promised compared to the estimate of forces, even if all conditions were fulfilled, and I believed that it would be possible to reach the Maas and, under favorable conditions, establish one or two bridge-heads on the opposite bank. As to the clock time of the attack I was unable to give my attitude until I had gained information about the details. In any case I was against a long fire preparation.

Having had my say, I was able to ascertain the existence of a complete agreement with the ideas of Field Marshal Model, who as I now perceived, had been informed several days ago, and had studied the entire enterprise thoroughly in his own characteristic way. I also observed obvious signs of relief in him at our agreeing, as he had suggested another solution if not yet in detailed form, to Field Marshal v. Rundstedt, which I have reasons for believing with certainty, and now he felt sure that I would back a similar suggestion of his to Hitler. We also, completely agreed as to the date of the start of the attack, even if to subordinate command he insisted on the 1 Dec being the date of the attack. During the time following he several times both verbally and in writing suggested a postponement of the start of the attack (on the 1 Dec), for, as soon as the orders of the Operations Section of the Wehrmacht were issued numerous

difficulties and obstructions turned up, leaving their mark on the work during the weeks following, and oppressing every responsible soldier with misgiving and doubt, as to whether the requirements could at all be met. Field Marshal Model fully shared my feelings, even if it was not to be known by his manner. It much more corresponded to his methods to strain every nerve to hasten the preparations, so that the attack might start at the earliest date, in order not to increase the risk.

Likewise, to subordinate commands he never expressed any doubt nor allowed any to arise as to the objectives - Antwerp and Brussels - put by Hitler, and during conferences, map exercises, etc., he emphasized that they were the total objective of the successful operation carried in the direction of the Maas. But it is a fact that since the 2 and 3 Nov he has never discussed an operation west of the Maas with me. Estimating our real situation and that of the enemy correctly, he never more took the operation into consideration with me, all the less, as week after week the Operations Section of the Wehrmacht cancelled promises, which also by him were considered absolute conditions for a success.

Field Marshal Model then explained his ideas about a possible solution: considering the forces envisaged in the plan and the circumstances and facts pointed out by me, it would be better because more promising to advance

across the Maas, but, having successfully broken through and reached the open terrain, to turn off to the northwest or north with both Pz Armies, so that the left wing of the 5 Pz Army would be protected by the Maas. This main thrust, which had to be covered by the 7 Army in the south, was to be launched in cooperation with the 15 Army, pushing forward from Sittard, in such a way that both jaws of the pincer met in the vicinity of Tongres, northwest of Liege. Thus a pocket would develop, encircling the British-American forces fighting between Sittard and Monschau; their number was estimated to amount to 25 - 30 divisions. How the operation was to be carried on after our arrival on the Maas remained questionable, and could be discussed later on. If the situation developed favorably, then the attack envisaged on Antwerp could still be launched. It is evident that the carrying out of this plan would change the disposition of forces and, implicitly, the location of the points of gravity. We still had time to take this into consideration. This solution, which in my opinion should include large bridgeheads west of the Maas, from which to conduct further operations, in our opinion corresponded better to the forces envisaged in the plan of attack. The result of this was the suggestion of the so-called "small solution." How Model pictured from this the development of the required goal and the continuation of the operation,

he did not tell me.

We made an appointment for the following day. In the evening of the same day I instructed my Chief of Staff. In this conference I based my opinion on the following considerations:

1. The breakthrough must be successful, as it is the condition for the entire operation.
2. The method of attack must, with absolute certainty, guarantee that the assault troops will gain the banks of the Our at as numerous points as possible. Their tasks will be to obtain control of the western bank to an adequate extent in order to prevent the enemy from covering our bridge-building spots and crossings with observed fire.
3. Furthermore, the method of attack must guarantee that our penetration into the enemy lines of resistance, including combat in the depth of his disposition, takes place speedily, so that the Pz Divisions, being the backbone of the attack, could cross the Our in good time on the very day of the attack. Utilizing the effect of the shock, they were to move forward to the west without delay, in order to penetrate through the gaps knocked into the defense system of the enemy by the assault troops, and thus achieve a breakthrough. Further, the deep penetration of the assault troops had to be carried out rapidly so that the inevitable concentration, arising when the Pz Divisions

and the supporting arms - artillery, antiaircraft artillery, smoke battalions, etc. - were brought up, would not be covered by artillery fire from the depth (that is to say, from the area east and west of the Our). Probably only one road of advance would be available to each of them to and from the crossings.

4. The penetration into the depth cannot be considered successful until we have gained the line Lascheid - Heinerscheid - Roder - Hosingen. At the same time this line is the one the infantry takes to prevent the enemy from observing our movements towards the Our, and the line where the Pz Divisions will pass them when they advance.

The following is to be pointed out and emphasized again and again: the entire enterprise must be kept a secret at any cost. Everything had to be subordinate to this.

These four demands influenced the organization and employment of the forces, which - in general - were determined by the objective of the operation, the tasks of the Army, the terrain to be taken, etc., and, for the rest, were to some extent decreed in the instructions given by the Operations Staff of the Wehrmacht. Thus, very definite bases for the attack were given and it was difficult to decide which consideration was to be put in first place, and thus get a decisive influence upon organization and employment of the forces.

The four demands mentioned by me were interrelated, and to my opinion they were very closely connected with the method of attack, which - as I have pointed out - was to produce the conditions for the penetration and breakthrough.

The method of attack, decisive for the organization and employment of the forces, must be explained in more detail here, as my suggestions considerably changed the original orders of the Operations Staff of the Wehrmacht.

I explained to my Chief of Staff that we had to use the method of attack which most speedily and most certainly would lead to the success, as put forward by me in my four demands. The following had to be taken into consideration.

a. The organization and distribution of the forces of the enemy, his activities in his positions, and the possible effect of the weapons, in relation to estimate of the terrain.

b. The fighting qualities and abilities of our own troops, and the possibility of support for the assault troops from interdependent weapons, according to kinds, number and ammunition as announced. These supporting weapons are: their own heavy weapons, assault guns used as assault and antitank weapons, artillery of all kinds, including smoke-shell mortars, and the Luftwaffe.

c. The terrain with regard (a) to the battle and the movements of the infantry and its supporting weapons and (b) how high we could estimate the effect of these supporting weapons in this terrain.

d. The time necessary for the assault troops to get from their jump-off position to the line Laschied - Heinerscheid - Roder - Hosingen.

The following details can be added to this:

Re "a": The distribution of the forces of the enemy and his conduct. In the morning they had been described by Gen Krebs on the basis of the daily report of the 7 Army which at the time was in the sectors of the 6 SS and the 5 Pz Armies. The various results of reconnaissance in the tactical area (according to the situation on the 15 Dec) gave the following picture of the First American Army:

Opposed to the attacking 6 SS Pz Army on the southern wing was the Fifth Army Corps including the Ninety-ninth Division in the sector Losheim - the River Olef; adjoining in the south were two divisions in the sector as far as Konzern (incl.).

In the sector of the 5 Pz Army the following units were employed:

In the area of Eifel the Eighth Army Corps including the One Hundred and Sixth Division (opposed to the 18 and the 62 Volks Gren Divisions.).

The Twenty-eighth Division from Luetzkampen as far as the River Sauer at Wallendorf (opposed to both Pz Corps);

The Fourth Division (opposed to the northern wing of the 7 Army).

In the tactical area of the sector mentioned above we did not expect reserves worth the mentioning, and behind them no large units either.

According to our estimate east and west of the Our the enemy only seemed to have outposts, partly equipped with heavy infantry weapons, and more or less fortified positions alongside the roads; furthermore they had strongpoints at field strength standard, in which the presence of relief forces and reinforcements for the outposts and heavy supporting weapons was partly ascertained, partly supposed. When it was dark this thin line of outposts was secured by contact patrols. Protected by the darkness our own reconnaissance patrols could still penetrate the foremost outpost line of the enemy, and they reported the presence of a firmer line of security in the contour line repeatedly mentioned above, which at the same time covered the quarters of the troops not employed. We supposed that smaller armored groups (Panzerrudel) supported the fighting of the outposts and in the line of resistance - the above-mentioned line, we had repeatedly observed their movements. Until midnight the

enemy was vigilant and alert, and his reconnaissance patrols were lively until early in the morning. But from four or five o'clock their alertness and care decreased considerably. The activity of the artillery was until now limited to harassing fire and to occasional sudden concentrations. From all this we could draw the conclusion that the enemy felt pretty safe. Because it was a contributing factor in deciding the method of the attack it must be kept in mind that, according to reports given by our patrols, the individual outposts had good communications with each other by means of radio or telephone, and partly also by means of acoustic alarm installations, so we could take it for granted that communications to the rear were as well organized. As the installations of the West Wall were situated along the river Our and the front line of the combat sector of the 58 Pz Corps ran east of same, the installations were partly in our hands, partly in those of the enemy. As combat positions, however, they were of no importance to either of us.

The artillery was emplaced in such a position that it was able to cover the roads leading to the Our and the crossing point, partly even with observed fire.

The troops holding the district of Eifel were considerably stronger and more compact and more exposed forward.

They presented a greater number of strong and well-protected strongpoints - some of them German installations - around which other islands of resistance were grouped.

The contour and vegetation of the terrain to some degree limited the possibilities for observation along the banks of the Our. Only the high-angle weapons reached their full effect, that of the flat fire weapons was limited. The river itself and all accesses to it could be very effectively covered by fire.

Re "b": The fighting qualities and ability of our own troops: with regard to fighting qualities I repeated to my Chief of Staff what I had told Field Marshal Model in the morning (see also III.1.pp.40-41). My Chief of Staff had a thorough knowledge of the troops, their condition and the limits of their ability.

About using the new Volks Grenadier Divisions, to be sent in for the first time, I had my doubts, because:

(a) in my opinion they had too high a percentage of personnel from the Navy and the Luftwaffe with no infantry combat experience whatsoever; and (b) because they did not have adequate means and time for their training, nor subordinate commanders who could give them suitable instructions.

As to details see III.3.

Decisive for the choice of the method of the attack was for me the fact that I no longer believed it possible for

the majority of the infantry (in this case also including the dismounted Volks Grenadiers) to penetrate by day - it was supposed to take place between 1000 and 1030 hrs - into the depth, and do battle with an enemy, well prepared for resistance, well equipped with everything including vehicles, and consequently very mobile. I had all the more reason for considering this impossible: (a) after the enemy would be "awakened" by a more or less extended preparation; (b) in one of the sectors of the Army we had to cross the Our in the face of the enemy, and gain the control over a sufficient portion of the western bank, and (c) the combat in the depth for a long time would have to be carried on without assault guns and tanks, which for the time being could not be taken to the opposite bank, because of the lack of undamaged bridges.

Considering the calibers of the weapons, issue of ammunition, the results of our previous reconnaissance (in general and with regard to the emplacement of the artillery) and the terrain, I further doubted that the two hours' preparation of the heavy infantry weapons, artillery, and smoke-shell mortars would be as effective as the Highest Command imagined.

Re "c": The terrain with regard to the combat activity, the movements of the infantry, and the possibilities for effect of the supporting weapons:

As mentioned above the assault guns, tanks, and artillery could not for the time being be taken across the river. The support given by the artillery and smoke-shell mortars was very limited, because of the nature of the terrain. This limitation affected our possibilities of watching the terrain occupied by the enemy, as well as the choice of gun positions and the efficacy of operations in the vast wooded terrain, full of ravines. Decisive for a successful support of our infantry by the artillery was (a) a strong, maneuverable fire with the object of eliminating the islands of resistance of the enemy, which prevented us from crossing the Our; and (b) an adequate fire and the possibility for strong concentrations in and behind the oft-mentioned contour line. For a large number of batteries it was a hard job to find gun positions for the carrying out of the first task, owing to the fact that the terrain on both sides of the Our was very steep, but it was much more difficult to find positions for the second task, as, in the wooded terrain and in the ravines, only very limited space was available for emplacements having a favorable range. On the other hand, we could not concentrate too many guns in the favorable positions.

West of the Our a successful - because in all phases observable - support to the infantry could, first of all, only be given by the heavy machine guns and heavy mortars.

Consequently, if the enemy were willing to defend his position - "defend" to be understood in the sense of the German Command Directives - tedious time-consuming fighting would probably develop throughout the depth of his system of defense, the outcome of which appeared the more dubious to me the earlier the enemy was "awakened." We would not only have to capture one island of resistance after the other, but also to gain control of the terrain, which here has a mountainous character, overgrown with trees, underwood, and brush. This would take our time. And time was also needed for the movements of the small detachments which would mostly have to carry the attack, and for the following up of the supporting weapons, light and heavy machine guns, ammunition carriers, signal communication men, etc.

The terrain also had a decisive influence insofar as the district of Eifel with its vast woods and numerous ravines was very unfavorable for the employment of the armored units, consequently infantry corps had to be sent in here. In the northern part of the combat sector of the Army the Ardennes cut across our direction of advance, and limited the movements of the armored units to a few, however excellent roads. This rendered attacks on the flanks and the roads of supply of the penetrating armored units easier than did the more open terrain in the southern

part of the sector , as the enemy, if penetrated into the vast and almost impenetrable forests and ravines, would be able to hide here and organize a resistance behind our front line.

Re "d": Estimated time for the breakthrough. In fixing the time for the attack it had to be kept in mind that the infantry, operating more or less independently west of the Our, up to this point had to be supported by observed artillery fire of all calibers and smoke-shell mortars when it came to overcoming the first serious resistance. If this were not the case the support would be unsuccessful.² We could not expect the infantry to fight during darkness without an effective support by all kinds of weapons, and direct cooperation with its own assault guns, opposed to an enemy fully prepared for defense and having 9 - 10 hours at his disposal for getting set.

The time at the disposal of the infantry was not sufficient.

These considerations of a technical nature led to the following conclusion:

The attack during the daytime after the fire preparation, as envisaged by the Highest Command, does not with absolute

2 But this observation was possible only up till 1700, if one reckoned with the date 10.12 for the day of the attack, as I did. I looked for this resistance in front of or in the aforementioned contour line. If, as planned, the attack began between 1000 and 1030, there would be only 5-6 hours in which to get from the Our to the contour line.

certainty guarantee a penetration and breakthrough. The reasons for this have been fully discussed above: the situation of the enemy, the fighting qualities of our own troops, the terrain, the estimate of time. We have to choose a method of attack commensurate with the capacities of the infantry, from which it must be demanded that it take the line, repeatedly mentioned, as soon as possible in order to run the Pz Divisions through, which then have to exploit the night of the first day of attack for achieving a breakthrough.

I saw a possibility for this in the method of "infiltration" of assault troops and the infantry, following closely, over a broad front still under cover of darkness, a method often successfully employed by us and the Red Army in the east. Considering the above mentioned this method had the following advantages:

1. Previous conduct of the enemy and the organization of his forces with scattered outposts and, in addition, the terrain definitely favored an infiltration.

We could hope to push through the forward line of outposts and go around the strongpoints in the rear without the enemy's noticing it, if we did it in the early morning or still during the darkness, when the enemy slackened his

2 cont. Thus, shortly before dark, the infantry would be facing its hardest job.

alertness, and selected suitable crossing points along the Our and roads through the terrain west of the river.

Consequently the instructions of the Army also said that recognized strongpoints, sentry positions, etc., had to be bypassed, and that we had to push through, regardless of our neighbors, until an effective resistance would prevent our advancing on our own account without the support of observed artillery fire. Numerous forward observers of the artillery, instructed to cooperate with us, were to accompany our troops, and thus the artillery standing by, would be able to support this battle for the strongpoints in the depth with observed fire. If everything could be considered successful up to this point, it was also bound to be light or getting light, which did not exclude the possibility that some daring assault troops might succeed in further advancing. The attempt at infiltration would presumably be started at 0100 hrs, according to our estimate of time needed for the infantry, equipped for combat, and the heavy supporting weapons to cover the necessary distance during night and in a completely unknown terrain.

2. The fire preparation, in the form envisaged, is given up. The enemy is not to be "awakened." I wanted this understood literally.

On the other hand, the support by artillery and smoke-shell mortars is to be prepared in such a way that it can

be started at any time, when requested by the assault troops. This case may occur if the assault troops should unexpectedly meet strong resistance, impossible to overcome by means of their own weapons in close combat.

Indisputably recognized strong islands of resistance and gun positions were allowed to be covered by fire in individual cases from a certain time on, still to be fixed, providing the caliber of the weapons, consumption of ammunition and terrain indicated a successful outcome. In general an effort was to be made to observe a maximum of silence in order not to arouse the suspicion of the enemy.

3. If we advanced in this way on numerous points, we could further hope that the infantry would be able to find many gaps of this kind. But even if some of the detachments did not succeed in penetrating through the extreme line of outposts and the strongpoints in the rear, because the enemy prevented them from advancing, if we disposed our forces widely, if possible along the entire breadth of the front we would still have some troops left which, commanded by daring men, might prepare the deep penetration by their advance or fire on the deep flanks, or even by attacking in the rear of the outposts of the enemy.

Further, the advancing on numerous points had the advantage that the line of resistance of the enemy would be

shattered in several places. The fire of the smaller units - companies, battalions, regiments, divisions - would have to be distributed over a broad front as, under the first impression of being "attacked from all directions," the enemy would often be tricked into giving up his fixed plan of fire. Further, under the impression of the reports from the surprised troops the local reserves are often sent in earlier than desired, and in the still confused situation under the shock-like effect on the troops attacked, the number, direction and missions of the tactical reserves will often be fixed when it is still impossible to perceive what is the main thrust and which direction it will take.

Thus an advance on a broad front throws the enemy into confusion.

4. By an advance on numerous points the Our would be crossed on a broad front. This was desirable so that we could quickly reconnoiter crossing points and start the bridge-building at as many points as possible. The bridge-building at many points was also desirable for the opening of other possibilities for crossing in case the enemy destroyed one bridge.

5. At the same time this method of attack would save a great amount of ammunition, which would now be available for the artillery for the second part of its task, to be carried out on the same day, that is the support for the

battle for the line repeatedly mentioned.

6. By attacking in this way, the cooperation of the Luftwaffe in the tactical area was unnecessary.

In order to feel still more sure that a penetration and breakthrough would result in any case and quickly, we had to see to it and give instructions to the effect that the assault troops which at numerous points wanted - as I put it - "to be let in, be made so strong that they would be able to obtain admittance by force when attempts at preventing them from entering were made." These assault troops then, were to be made so strong that, in cooperation with their supporting arms, they would be able to overcome any resistance no matter what its strength. Their composition and organization, especially the selection of leaders, were just as important as reliable communications with an adequately strong artillery support.

As an orientation would no doubt be very difficult in the wooded and bushy terrain full of ravines, and these difficulties would be further increased by the fact that: (a) we could not instruct the troops as to the enterprise; and (b) the permanent troops did not have available enough leaders of reconnaissance patrols to lend to the attacking troops to lead them through the terrain, it was proposed that from a certain moment the terrain be floodlighted.

So I hoped that, if not all, at least many assault troops, which were to be followed closely by the infantry, would have reached the line Lascheid - Heinerscheid - Roder - Hosingen late in the morning, and I thought it possible that some assault troops might even have already penetrated. At this time of the day the artillery would be able to support them with observed fire when requested, and if the situation further developed favorably we could already start the building of bridges.

These bridges were to be built in continuation of the large roads leading to and from the Our. These roads were the only accesses to the river, as the terrain alongside the roads was completely impassable. Because of lack of bridge equipment it was furthermore necessary to utilize the abutments, supports and remains of the destroyed bridges. In such cases much could be done by means of prefabricated make-shift equipment, and the real equipment, especially the motor-transport equipment, could be saved for the bridges across the Clerf, Ourthe and Maas, or if temporarily used, it could speedily be brought up, after having been replaced by temporary equipment.

The method of attacking over a broad front made it necessary and possible to provide for building so many bridges that one could be assigned to each of the four

assault divisions of the two Pz Corps (see also paragraph 4, p. 64). The advantage was obvious: the movements of the Pz Divisions, ordered to cross the Our as speedily as possible, were not hampered by those of the infantry divisions, artillery, antiaircraft artillery, etc., as the movements of march were performed independently of each other.

From the method of attack and the advantages which could be obtained for further conduct of the battle and the moving forward of the Pz Divisions across the Our, we could already note a number of key points for the organization and employment of the forces of the Army.

But we had also to take the terrain of the large area into consideration: the district of Eifel and the wooded area in the northern part of the Ardennes which were less suitable for the movements of the Pz Divisions. It was necessary for them to use the southern part of the sector of the Army, where they first of all had to cross the Our and the Clerf, but where on the other hand they could be expected to advance speedily, because of the excellent roads, and utilizing the shock-like effect on the enemy. In the southern sector the possibilities for evading strong local resistance, when met with, were more favorable than in the vast wooded district of the northern Ardennes, which possessed few, however excellent roads.

As to the conduct of battle in the district of Schnee-Eifel the original plan of the Operations Staff of the Wehrmacht was to bypass it, and leave the annihilation of the enemy forces holding this district to the units following. The estimate of forces and the assignments of missions to the Army took this into account: we were to push through with one corps in the first wave, and the second corps and the infantry divisions were to follow. As to details see pp. 24-25. As I supposed that the enemy would hold the Schnee-Eifel in any case, and as it was impossible to get any information as to which of our forces were supposed to annihilate him - for, only in this way did the operation in the district of the Eifel, so easy to defend, have any prospect of success - from the outset I made preparations for taking care of this sore spot myself. My first visit to the 66 Army Corps confirmed this resolution to eliminate from the very start all possibilities for an attack on the flank of the tank wedge of the Army and that of the right neighbor. As long as a strong group of enemy forces remained in the district of Eifel the left wing of the 6 Pz Army was hampered in its advance as this enemy group by making use of the woods and ravines adjacent to the north was able to support its own forces, attacked by the southern wing of the 6 Pz Army. The cleaning out of this district was moreover necessary for the capture of

St. Vith, which together with Malmedy had to be regarded as a strongpoint (with regard to men and material) of the combat sector Monschau - Eifel, and being a center of excellent roads, was favorable for the transfer of enemy troops behind their front, and thus again a harassing of the advance or the flank of the 58 Pz Corps was made possible. The combat in and through the district of Eifel was definitely not so easy. In my opinion we could not entrust this task to just anybody, considering the possible disadvantages consequent for my Army. I envisaged, therefore, the employment of the Corps Headquarters' 66 Army Corps together with the front line division (the 28 Volks Gren Div), which knew the conditions well, and an additional division. It was necessary to assign this many forces because, according to the organization of the enemy in his positions, and considering the terrain, support by artillery and small groups of tanks the Corps considered the probable resistance so strong that one division would not suffice. As it was important for me to capture St Vith on the first day of the attack, I wanted to ensure a success by superiority in numbers and a corresponding conduct of battle. Our reconnaissance patrols had reported on artillery emplacements in the area of Auw and Bleialf and strong garrisons in Bleialf and Schoenberg. Consequently I incorporated the

annihilation of the group of forces round Bleialf into the plan of the attack, as I did not believe the infantry to be able to push through by Auw - Schoenberg on St Vith or by Winterspelt - Steinsbrueck on St Vith, if and as long as a strong group of enemy forces, supported by artillery and small armored groups, remained round Bleialf to destroy them later with attacks on the flanks and the rear. I made it therefore a condition that the Bleialf attack group (about a reinforced regiment) be subordinated to the commander of the right division, even if taken from the left division, as they operated in a common cause. For, the enemy troops in the area of Bleialf were only able to withdraw along the roads through Schoenberg - St. Vith. On the other hand the task was made easier for the reinforced regimental group the speedier the attack through Auw on Schoenberg or through Winterspelt on St Vith was carried forward. The point of gravity of the Corps was to be placed to the right, and the best divisions from the point of leadership and fighting qualities, had to be sent in there.

These Considerations led to the following conclusion:

1. We had to employ the Army over a broad front to be absolutely sure to achieve the penetration.
2. The Inf Corps, with 2 divisions, is to be thrown in on the right wing, with the mission of annihilating the enemy

forces in the Eifel.

3. The two Pz Corps had to be thrown in in the southern sector of the Army with two Pz Divisions and one Inf Division to each (for this purpose we had to propose an Inf Division to be brought up from the reserves of the Highest Command), with the mission, in cooperation with the Inf Division and the Pz Grenadiers of a Pz Division, of making a deep penetration and, taking advantage of the darkness during the night of the first day of attack, with the Pz Divisions completing the breakthrough in the direction of the Maas.

For the employment of the Pz Corps it had to be considered that each Corps should have a possibility of building one bridge across the Our for their heavy equipment, and if possible, a second, lighter one to enable the Pz Divisions to advance speedily in such a way that their march movements did not interfere with those of the infantry, artillery, anti-aircraft artillery, etc. As it was only possible to build the bridges in continuation of the roads the location of the bridges across the Our, the roads east and west of the river, and the possibilities for a crossing of the Clerf and the Our the already gave clear indications for the lanes of movement of the two Pz Corps: furthermore, the system of roads leading to the Maas and the crossing sites were decisive.

In fixing their zones of movement and combat we had to take this into consideration, but without making the lines of

demarcation too rigid.

Division of labor was ordered in the Staff. As the Staff of the Army was still employed and a continuation of the British-American large-scale offensive against the Rhine could be expected to start in a short time the Commander in Chief and the Chief of Staff could not be dispensed with. Consequently the G3, Obstlt Neckelmann of the General Staff, one special missions staff Officer and one clerk were detached and formed a duty staff, which was sent to Manderscheid (Eifel), the future Headquarters of the Army. The work of this party was extremely important as, first of all working independently, it had to procure all the material upon which the Army leadership was to base all its decisions. Experienced in the practical service with troops and with the general staff of Pz troops this industrious and circumspect general staff officer put the mosaic together in an excellent way. In his work he got eminent support from the Commander in Chief and the Chief of the Staff of the 7 Army, who rendered all necessary documents available to him.

The 7 Army had further to reconnoiter the situation of the enemy keeping full secrecy. On the whole the correctness of the reports was confirmed when the Army attacked and broke through on the 16-17 Dec.

Every day we expected the attack against the Roer to start and with this the offensive against the Rhine,

consequently I kept in close connection with Field Marshal Model, and we kept each other informed as to all details about the offensive.

First of all I met him in a command post of my Army on the 3 Nov, in order to discuss the underlying principles of the conduct of the attack, as fully discussed above. Even as a commander of a group of armies Model had not lost sight of the requirements of the intermediate commands; he was open to suggestions when they were justified by the facts and presented with determination. It is a proof of his willingness to accept responsibility that he at once sanctioned my suggestions, which formed the basis of all future work and consequently were urgent. They concerned the following, which was in opposition to the former orders issued by the Operations Section of the Wehrmacht:

- a. the employment of all three corps in the front line.
- b. the subordination to the Army of an additional Inf Division so that each Pz Corps would have one Inf Division for the breakthrough.
- c. the start of the attack (clock time) to be made dependent on the method of attack, and no long fire preparation in the area of the Army.
- d. a change in the zones of movement leading to the Maas, to the effect that the Army was not obliged to use just the crossings between Amay and Namur, but was free to cross at any

place as the development of the situation offered. The employment of the Army over a broad front took this into consideration.

e. the postponement of the start of the attack until the 10 December.

We then once more discussed the operative solution, and Model told me that he would submit his suggestions to the Operations Staff of the Wehrmacht on the same day. His suggestions would not alter my plan, as the intended breadth of the front line of the Army with the point of gravity on the southern wing already prepared the way for his solution.

On the following day I and the G3 went to the Headquarters of the 65 Army Corps - the stationary corps - at Gerolstein. The district of Eifel was already covered with snow. No officer there had been instructed. The correctness of our estimate of the enemy and the terrain, as described by Lt Gen Krebs on the 2 November, was confirmed. The commanders of the 18 and 26 Volks Gren Divisions told me details about the conduct of the enemy. At the same time I managed to get a personal impression of the terrain envisaged for the concentration of the troops.

In addition the G3 reported several times to me, driving from Manderscheid to Koenigshoven for this purpose. The Army was also well furnished by the Staff of the Group of Armies with documents, although aerial photographs of the terrain

and the banks of the rivers were impossible to obtain. As no agents were left behind after the withdrawal of the Wehrmacht in the autumn of 1944 details about the enemy in his deeper positions were unobtainable. But the Group of Armies was well informed at all times about enemy organization as a whole and location of the large combined-arms units.

The following details about the period of preparation are noteworthy:

1. An antiaircraft brigade in the communications zone experimented with floodlighting the terrain, with the purpose of supporting the advance of the infantry through the difficult terrain during the darkness. The second experiment, already, confirmed my opinion that the infantry ought to start the attack when it was still dark and, providing atmospheric conditions were favorable, that the assault troops should be supported in finding their bearings by means of searchlights. This actually happened, as I learned from the troops on the 16 December.

2. The Higher Artillery Commander (Genlt Metz), the Commander of the Army Engineers (Obst Bujard), and the Commander of the Army Signal Service (Obst Steininger) got their instructions about the 20 November. This was absolutely necessary as - while still keeping full secrecy - they had to

procure the data necessary for the employment of the arms in their charge. Of their instructions given orally for the most part, the following are worth the mentioning:

The conduct of battle of the artillery:

Artillery reconnaissance had to be carried out at once in cooperation with the 7 Army in accordance with the present plans of attack of the Army. No long preparation by artillery or smoke-shell mortars before the start of the attack is possible, as: (a) the targets are not adequately reconnoitered; (b) our amount of ammunition does not permit an effective reduction of the enemy; (c) the suspicion of the enemy should not be awakened.

A short but very concentrated preparation by artillery is to take place, the fire of as many guns as possible to be directed on favorable targets.

The opening of the fire will be uniformly fixed for the entire front of the Army. The artillery will be directed by Corps Headquarters (Arkos). They must have some batteries available in order to be able to take unreconnoitered strong-points or artillery emplacements with effective fire.

Order of procedure of the artillery: good mobile artillery generally that of the divisions, is to follow the advance detachments and spearheads. Only a portion of the Volks Artillery Corps and smoke brigades is to follow, owing to the lack of prime movers. What is left of artillery, etc.,

will later on be brought up by echelons. A thorough planning of all details is necessary; it is to be born in mind that the artillery get adequate space for its ammunition echelons to ensure a safe bringing up of supplies of ammunition, also over long distances.

The ammunition situation: The "Arko" is strictly to supervise the equipment with ammunition in the different phases and the bringing up of supplies, which must be adjusted according to the situation.

Command of the engineers:

On bridge for all types of loads across the river Our, and later one across the Ourthe, Clerf in the lanes of movement of the Pz Corps is necessary. If possible only make-shift bridge-building equipment will be used on the Our, as mobile equipment is necessary on the Clerf, Ourthe, and the Maas. The engineers are to be commanded by the Corps Headquarters, with strict cooperation of all engineer forces available - including the engineer battalions of the divisions. The Army directs the bridge-columns, orders their bringing up and employment, is also in charge of the Organization Todt detachments and their employment. The production of make-shift equipment for the crossing of the Our is to be started at once. The constant changes in the water level, and the replacements necessary in case of losses owing to the activity of the enemy will be taken into

consideration. Unloading areas in the neighborhood of the crossing sites will be reconnoitered.

Command of the antiaircraft artillery:

Held by the Higher Antiaircraft Commander of the Group of Armies, considering the wishes of the Army. Heavy and light antiaircraft detachments will be assigned.

3. The still open questions about the date of the attack, method of attack, application of the forces, the rendering mobile, and the supplying of them, number and condition of the engineer troops, and the clock time of the attack were repeatedly discussed in detail with Field Marshal Model. These discussions resulted in the making of numerous suggestions. I still remember them, but I do not think it necessary to give a detailed account of them here.

The offensive of the enemy, started on the 16 Nov west of the Roer, compelled us to resort to the ammunition and fuel reserves of the High Command of the Wehrmacht destined for the attack. In addition the capacity of the railroads decreased, and thus the bringing up of supply and the re-organization of the troops were hampered. All this made the High Command of the Wehrmacht at first postpone the deadline for the attack to about 1 December. Then, after the Chief of the Operations Staff of the Wehrmacht returned to the Fuehrer Headquarters from a conference with the Commander in Chief in the west on the 26 November, Hitler decided on

the 27 Nov that the attack would begin on the 7 December.

On the whole Hitler agreed with the application of the troops envisaged for the breakthrough and the method of attack of the Army, and he gave up the long preparation by artillery fire. Now it was only to last for 30 - 60 minutes, and the fire along the entire front of the Group of Armies was not to begin before 0530 hrs. Consequently the attack of the infantry would have to begin between 0600 and 0630 hrs.

Corresponding to the suggestions made by my Army it was also decided that in selecting our bridgeheads we need not rigidly keep within our lines of demarcation. The line of demarcation to the right adjoining army was fixed in such a way that the crossing site at Huy fell to the 6 Pz Army, consequently the combat sector of my Army was extended to the south as far as Givet. If according to the development of the situation it proved to be more favorable to cross the Maas south of Namur my Army was also permitted to do so. But in this case it also had to cross the Sambre sector. I supposed that strong resistance was not to be expected on the Sambre, on the whole flowing from the West to the East, and in the area west of Namur, if my Army succeeded in crossing the Maas south of Namur. The use of both Pz Corps, spread out on a broad front toward the Maas included a consideration of this.

The decisive questions about the condition of the troops were not solved. Further it was not decided with what combined-arms units my Army could reckon. The condition of the troops likely to be taken into consideration was so bad that to Field Marshal Model I expressed my doubts as to the prospects of a success. He agreed with me, but for the time being he was unable to get satisfactory information about improvements in making the troops and bridge columns mobile, and about the speeding up of supplies, all of which were decisive and urgent problems.

4. Further it was a difficulty that the Headquarters of the 47 and 58 Pz Corps were not yet available, and that the Staff of the Army was still employed. But it was withdrawn on the 23 Nov, transferred to Manderscheid (Eifel) and could devote all its time to the preparations. In the concentration area I found the Headquarters of the 58 Pz Corps in Eisenschmit; the Staff of the 47 Pz Corps, however, was not withdrawn here from the Roer sector until the 5 Dec, where from the 6 Dec on it was available completely staffed. Previously this headquarters had detached a duty staff and transferred it to Kyllburg as my Army had done.

5. Very useful were the discussions of the plan with the staff of the Group of Armies and the adjoining armies. Besides Field Marshal Model the Commanders of the 5 Pz Army and the 7 Army with those of their officers who had

received instructions, the Staff of the Group of Armies, and in addition some experts were present. (The Commander of the 6 Pz Army did not take part in any of the following fundamental conferences, but was represented by Lt Gen Bittrich of the Waffen-SS. The Commander of the 6 Pz Army was not even present at the map maneuver of his own army, held in Bruehl and conducted by Bittrich).

These discussions took place:

Three times with the Group of Armies, once at the Staff Headquarters in the neighborhood of Krefeld, twice at Muenstereifel,

Once with the 7 Army at Muenstereiffel,

Once with the 5 Pz Army,

Once with the 6 Pz Army at Bruehl. In all conferences deficiencies were stressed which would make success doubtful.

Therefore Field Marshal Model and I welcomed the opportunity of reporting personally to Hitler on the development of preparations. This conference took place in the afternoon of the 2 December in the Reich Chancellory in Berlin and lasted several hours.

Although I had been in many conferences in the Fuehrer Headquarters and although I have reported to Hitler myself several times, I do not remember any conference as clearly as this one. As usual Model was very well prepared and, assisted by his excellent G3 (Lt Col Reichhelm of the Gen

Staff), he had all data at hand. His speech was short and clear, made in the concise language of the experienced aggressive soldier, and everybody in the large conference room listened with respect. He had given his position frankly, courageously and vigorously. Hitler was also strongly impressed. Of persons who interested me the following were present: Keitel, Jodl, Winter (Deputy Chief of Operations Staff of the Wehrmacht), Buhle (Chief of the Staff of the Army (Heer)), Killer (Chief of the Gen Staff of the Luftwaffe), Burgdorff (Chief of the Army Personnel Office), the Commander of the 6 Fz Army, Obergruppenfuehrer Fegelein, Obstlt Reichhelm of the Gen Staff, and Genlt Westphal (Chief of the Gen Staff of the Commander in Chief in the West).

Nothing was changed in the principles of the operation.³ Consequently the great problems remained unsolved. The objective was still Antwerp. No decision was made as to the secondary attack to be launched from the northern wing of the 15 Army. The 7 Army did not get reinforcements as

3 Although Model, in his own characteristic way, had cautioned me ahead of time not to be too abrupt in emphasizing to Hitler my lack of confidence in the infantry's ability to effect a breakthrough against this enemy while it was still daylight and my consequent desire for an advancement of the time of attack, it was plain to see that he was glad I had been summoned too and could lend him my support if need be.

envisioned in the original plan. The question remained still open whether the forces and equipment promised would arrive in time before the attack. It was impossible to learn whether or to which extent feint attacks and especially containing maneuvers of a tactical kind would be carried out in other sectors of the front. Further the following problems were discussed: the defective refitting of the units, particularly in regard to making the artillery, bridge-building columns, and the maintenance and towing service of the Pz troops mobile, the considerable gaps in the supplies, which now turned up and proved impossible to fill, clarifying the doubts and worries about the probable lack of men and material in the depth, and in consequence of this the doubts about being able to feed the attack. Hitler agreed to the change in the hour of the attack and the giving up of the preparation of artillery. The fire preparation was limited to about one hour, but a large amount of ammunition was to be allotted for the purpose. As the 6 Pz Army did not agree to the clock time I suggested, I must briefly state my attitude, also because on the 29 Nov in opposition to the 26.11 decision of the Operations Staff of the Wehrmacht the Commander in Chief in the West once more suggested that the beginning of the attack be postponed until 0800 hrs., referring to the probability of a heavy fog at 0530 hrs, which would prevent

our artillery from reaching its full effect; furthermore, he was of the opinion that the troops were not sufficiently experienced in night combat, which required more than the ability to find one's way. These doubts are fully justified. But the whole situation of the enemy opposed to my sector directly invited an "infiltration," which demanded two requirements of battle technique: (a) complete preservation of the element of surprise, (b) daring, unhesitating assault troops, not intimidated by unexpected resistance, but pursuing the attack with gusto. At numerous points this infiltration is bound to bypass the enemy fire, which cannot completely cover a thin line of security. But if the enemy is located in permanent fortifications an infiltration is impossible. Only in a carefully prepared and conducted infantry attack carried out in close cooperation with all supporting arms will it be possible to overpower such fortifications. As I do not know the situation of the enemy troops opposed to the 6 Pz Army, I am unable to judge whether or to what extent a similar method of attack on individual points or along the entire front of the Army would have been successful. There is no doubt that the situation of the enemy, his behaviour, and the terrain have a decisive influence upon the method of attack. In the area of my Army much was decided by this. It is equally correct that our first moving forward and the opening of fire had to be fixed

uniformly for all three armies, because with this the element of surprise would disappear and the entire enterprise be disclosed to the enemy. Therefore - despite a completely different method of attack - I could agree to the suggestion of opening the fire at 0530 hrs, without jeopardizing the plan of attack of my Army. I permitted attempts at infiltration as of 0400 hrs, at points where resistance was not to be expected.

The fixing of the clock time of the attack at 0800 hrs in the area of my Army would have had an unfavorable influence on the building of the bridges, and consequently on the moving forward of the Pz Divisions and the following of the artillery. As to clock time for the opening of the fire we stuck to 0530 hrs. The 10 Dec was figured on as the date for the beginning of the attack. We could not learn anything certain about the kind and extent of the support to be given by the Luftwaffe. In reply to my question on this Hitler said to me when I left, "You can count on 2000 planes for the attack," and added, "1000 for Dietrich and 1000 for you."

Because of the fact that Model reported, and that he and I answered questions and suggestions, Genlt Westphal, Chief of Staff of the Commander in Chief in the West, was never asked and did not get an opportunity to speak to Hitler.

As Model did not think the information given by the Chief of the Staff of the Army (Heer), Lt. Gen. Buhle, sufficient, in our presence Hitler several times telephoned director Sauer, deputy of minister Speer, who was on a duty trip, to gather information from him about the amount of equipment and the possible date of delivery.

The result of the conference as a whole was consequently unsatisfactory. I returned to my Army Headquarters on the 4 Dec at noon.

For the benefit of my Army I evaluated the results of the conference as follows: As both static divisions (the 18 and the 26 Volks Gren Divisions) were included in the four infantry divisions made available by the High Command of the Wehrmacht, we had to throw in two Pz Divisions in the first wave, that is to say they had to take part in the breakthrough and the combat in the depth (the 2 and the 116 Pz Divisions). This already meant a great loss to the offensive strength of the Pz Divisions, but they were still more weakened by the fact that the 7 Army was given neither a fast division nor a good mobile advance detachment. Consequently already before the beginning of the attack we could foresee that they and the forces made available to them would not be strong enough to carry out their mission - the protection of the southern flank of the wedge of attack, reaching from the Maas as far as the area of Luxemburg. This circumstance was bound to influence

the movements and engagements of the 47 Pz Corps, which now lacked the protection which only a mobile division with plenty of fighting power would have been able to give, considering the excellent roads and the proportion between our forces and those of the enemy. As a matter of fact the weak elements of the almost immobile 5 Parachute Division just adhered to the left wing of the 26 Volks Gren Division. The situation reports of this division did not fully correspond to the facts I had ascertained concerning the situation south of Bastogne, and the reports of the Commanders of the Pz Lehr Division and the 26 Volks Gren Division confirmed my opinion.

As there were no chances of any real improvement in making the artillery and the bridge-building equipment mobile before the day of attack, we decided only to have half of the artillery and the smoke brigades leave their jump-off positions, in order to save motor vehicles for the remaining portion of the artillery, its ammunition columns, and the bridge-building equipment.

To my special regret I hardly got time to take care of my troops - which, indeed, were my tools.

Both static divisions were instructed as to their missions at a very late moment. They just got time enough to organize their assault companies and give them a short training. As these divisions had very broad sectors to defend, I no longer

had time for this reason too to speak to the commanders of the regiments and battalions. Not until the first week of December did the first elements of the 62 Volks Gren Div arrive by train in the area of my Army: at the beginning of the attack only about 2/3 of the 560 Volks Gren Division had arrived, one infantry regiment and portions of the artillery and engineer troops completely failed to come. The commanders of the 2 and the 116 Pz Divisions had at least been able to take part in the map maneuvers of their Commanding Generals. The new Commander of the 2 Pz Div did not arrive at the Army Staff Headquarters until the 14 December. Only the 2 Pz Division was able to give its troops a short training as it had been withdrawn for five weeks for freshening up. On the 9 Dec the 116 Pz Division gradually arrived by train, after having been heavily engaged for weeks. This division had plenty of freshening up to do before being marched off to the assembly area. There was hardly time left for training. The Pz Lehr Division came from action with the "G" Army Group, and was enroute until the 15 December. The late arrival of the Fuehrer Begleit Brigade was bound to have serious consequences. On the 15 Dec it was still not fully assembled, and owing to an automobile accident its commander was not quite in form. My serious apprehensions in this respect came true. For details see pp. 109.

With the orders of the Group of Armies for the attack (30 Nov) the final form of the instructions of the Operations Staff of the Wehrmacht arrived. They ran approximately as follows - according to Schramm:

"Utilizing the darkness the 5 Pz Army breaks through the positions of the enemy in the sector Golzheim - Gemuend, and pushes forward as far as the Maas. This river is to be crossed on both sides of Namur and activities of the enemy in the rear of the 6 Pz Army on the line Antwerp - Brussels - Namur - Dinant are to be prevented."

In a conference with the 3 Commanding Generals the plan of operation of my Army was once more carefully gone over, and after the completion of the map maneuver, which I conducted, it was put down in final form. On the whole it was a compilation of all that for weeks and in the course of successive instructions had been discussed and arranged in all details between the Army Staff and the subordinate commands.

Nothing had to be changed in the principles fully discussed above.

As far as I am able to recall my Army issued the following orders: orders for the assembly of the troops for action, supplemented by a very detailed schedule of routes of march, times of march, resting places, and moving into position.

Orders for the moving into position and the attack, supplemented by a special battle directive.

Special directives as usual.

In the orders of attack of my Army, issued on the 10 Dec 1944, the Corps Headquarters were assigned the following missions:

The 66 Army Corps was to attack the enemy in the district of the Schnee Eifel, enveloping him from both sides, capture St Vith, and then deeply echeloned either push forward to and across the Maas sector, on both sides of Andenne, or join the left wing of the Army.

The 58 Pz Corps was to gain possession of the Our sector over a broad front on both sides of Curen, push past Houffalize across the Maas in the sector Andenne - Namur and capture bridgeheads.

The 47 Pz Corps is to take the crossing Our along a broad front in the sector Dasburg - Gemuend, push through the Clerf sector, seize Bastogne and, arranged in a deep echelon formation, push across the Maas at Namur and south of it.

The Pz Lehr Division and the Fuehrer Begleit Brigade are, primarily, to be available as a reserve of the Army in order to exploit the first breakthrough of one of the corps, and to join in a quick thrust to the Maas.

As first objective of the attack the orders of the Army designated: bridgeheads across the Maas. "The point is to

push incessantly through past all enemy resistance, regardless of zones of movement; if necessary dismount and continue on foot."

As treated in conferences and map maneuvers these directives also applied to localities which were defended. According to the directives issued by the Highest Command the mopping up of the area should be left for the units following; the reserves in the hands of the Higher Command to be brought up later were envisaged for this task. Actually only Bastogne came within the sphere of the Army, although the attention of the 66 Army Corps was several times called to the significance of St Vith (see the section on this). As the center of a very extended road net Bastogne was of special importance. I did not expect St Vith to play the important role as a strongpoint of resistance which it actually did during the operation.

The indication of the Headquarters of the 66 Army Corps of a possible employment "on the left wing of the Army" originated in our concerns about a possible long southern flank, if both Pz Corps and the 6 Army should speedily succeed in reaching the Maas. The possible diversion was only superficially discussed by the Staff of the Corps, as I took it for granted that the Infantry Corps would be more urgently needed for mopping up duties in the vast wooded district of the northern Ardennes, located between the zone of

advance of the 58 Pz Corps and the southern flank of the 6 Pz Army, and unfavorable for the employment of armored units.

On 10 Dec my Army took over the command of the sector formerly held by the 7 Army, its later zone of attack; that is to say mainly the sector of the 66 Army Corps and that of one regiment of the left adjoining corps. The Army Headquarters remained at Manderscheid until 15 Dec, when it was transferred to Dackscheid, northeast of Waxweiler.

On the 7 Dec orders were issued to the effect that the attack was to begin on the 14 Dec, but on the 11 Dec it was postponed to the 15 Dec, and finally on the 12 Dec to the 16 December. For a comparison between the leading principles of the Operations Staff of the Wehrmacht and my Army see supplement to III.1.

On the 11 and 12 Dec Hitler called together all higher and intermediate commanders concerned in the attack at the command post "Adlerhorst" near Ziegenberg (Hesse). Together with the commanding generals of both Pz Corps I was ordered to report on the 11 December. I here met Field Marshal v. Rundstedt, Field Marshal Model, Sepp Dietrich, the Commander in Chief of the 6 Pz Army, and almost all my subordinate division commanders.

Before the issuance of orders three divisions commanders, whom I had recommended for decorations, reported to Hitler

(Brig Gen Freiherr v. Elverfeldt, v. Waldenburg, Engel). Open-heartedly and frankly these three generals spoke to Hitler about their misgivings and apprehensions. Schramm has given a correct and detailed description of the reception (Schramm pp. 232). Hitler was "unwilling to discuss any further arguments or details as his decision was final."

It was not the first time that I was ordered to and took part in a conference with Hitler. The physical setting of these conferences, the atmosphere prevailing there, and the personal deportment of Hitler were nothing new to me. And now this conference excited me in a curious way. Contrary to my expectations it was not likely to relieve me of the apprehensions I still had about the impending "decision-seeking offensive." The only positive thing in it was Hitler's description of the situation of the enemy. Coming from this source which had all information at his disposal, it depicted a situation which was rather favorable for the task ahead of us.

The setting was full of contrasts. Among the generals reporting was a great number of responsible, battle-tried commanders of all ranks, who had a name at the front and knew their job. They possessed the full confidence of all their subordinates -- officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers.

In contrast to them was the highest military commanders of the Wehrmacht: one (Hitler) a broken man, with an unhealthy color, a caved-in appearance in his manner with trembling hands, sitting as if the burden of responsibility seemed to oppress him, and, compared to his looks in the last conference at the beginning of December, his body seemed still more decrepit and he was a man grown old, completely overworked and tired. He was no longer as strict and disciplined in his facial expression as he used to be due to the mental and physical burden resting upon him.

Jodl seemed irritable and touchy during the discussion.

In his whole behaviour Keitel showed that he had not taken as great a part in working out the plans and in the preparations for the offensive as Jodl had.

Schramm gives an accurate and detailed description of the receipt of the orders (Schramm pp. 235).

The majority of the generals of the Army were disappointed in the speech of the Highest Commander of the Wehrmacht, because he did not say one word about the matter in which his audience was most interested during this phase of the preparations: how can the leadership remedy the defects and insufficiencies still to be found in the undertaking a few days before its start?

Specifically from the Dec 2 conference in Berlin and from two visits of minister Speer to my headquarters, I had

no doubt that the Group of Armies, destined for the attack, was given every support in respect to kind, quantity, and quality as well as to the amount of time available, which under the prevailing circumstances could be given by the besieged fortress of Germany. On the 11 Dec, however, I could not help thinking that our own power - taken as a whole - had been estimated very high by the Highest Commander of the Wehrmacht and his assistants, despite the urgent suggestions of Field Marshal Model. These were matters so high level that I was unable to judge because the military-political overall situation and that of the enemy forces - this too in its general sense - was neither known nor accessible to me.

I, as well as my men, was prepared to strain every nerve to successfully carry out the mission assigned to us by the Head of the State and Highest Commander of the Wehrmacht.

The troops and their Commanders tackled their tasks with and unparalleled initiative.

Before I finish this paragraph I want to offer some remarks on timing - time of the offensive under optimum conditions:

The timing of the breakthrough in the sector of the two Pz Corps (for details see p. 61) was made on the supposition that we be in the possession of the line Weisswampach - Heinerscheid - Roder - Hosingen, where we expected the first

strong resistance of the enemy. If we held this line the enemy would be unable to observe or counteract (on the ground) our advance toward the River Our and the crossing of the Pz Divisions. Consequently the line of resistance had to be in our hands early on the day of the attack; for this reason we had to move into position while it was still dark. I hoped that we would have possession of this line about noon, so that the first elements of the Pz Divisions could cross the Our between about 1400 - 1500 hours, after having left their assembly areas about one hour earlier. After establishing and developing readiness for action, the advance detachments could move forward from the above-mentioned line at about 2000 hours and the bulk of the forces at about 2400 hours. In the evening of the second day of the attack I assumed the majority of the Pz Divisions would have reached the line Petit Tailles (on the road Grandmenil - Houffalize) - Houffalize - Bastogne - and the advance detachments attacking towards Marche - St Hubert. In the afternoon of the third day of the attack the majority of the Pz Divisions could have reached the elevated terrain about Marche with their northern flank, and the area of Rochefort - St Hubert with their southern one, and could then, on the fourth day of the attack, attack towards and across the Maas, on the banks of which, in this event, the advance detachments were

assumed to be ready during the night of the third day of the attack.

I expected the right corps to capture St Virth on the first day of the attack, and hoped that in the evening of the second day of the attack its advance detachments would be engaged west of the Salm river and the bulk of its forces at Vielsalm. Whether the 66 Army Corps should continue its advance to the west or whether it should entirely or in part turn off through Houffalize - Bastogne for the protection of the southern flank depended on and was here to be decided by the resistance with which the Pz divisions had met so far, on the situation on the southern wing of the 6 Pz Army, and the resistance which the Corps expected ahead of its own spearheads.

This has always been my notion of the time, and my Chief of Staff had the same ideas. In my opinion it takes account of the condition of the troops, the terrain, and the difficulties produced by the season, and after the capture of the line of resistance it did not suppose a strong enemy facing the front of the Army during the first four days of the attack.

When the plan of the attack was produced at the end of September the Operations Staff of the Wehrmacht - according to Schramm p. 84 - reckoned with being able, "if possible already on the second day, to establish bridgeheads on the

opposite bank of the Maas. Antwerp, the objective, could then be reached in 7 days." According to the same source (p. 190) the Commander in Chief in the West still on the 21 November believed that we could cross the Maas already on the first day. On the 15 December Field Marshal Model (again according to Schramm p. 239) reported to Hitler "that according to facts he had ascertained himself, double the time would be needed in the Eifel."

2. Terrain, Roads, and Railroads.

The description of the terrain applies to the entire area of attack of the Army Group "B" and not only to the zone of attack of the 5 Pz Army, because the general, over-all features of the terrain influenced the operations of my Army.

First of all I will enumerate the crossing sites which the attacking units of my Army were to try to gain. The attention of the reader of paragraph III.2 is especially called to this list (according to reconnaissance results up to the 15 December).

Our	Clerf	Salm	Ourthe	Maas
66 Corps Andler (2 km north of Schoenberg)		Vielsalm and Salmchateau		Huy
<u>intact</u>		<u>repair needed</u>		
Schoenberg		Bovigny		

intactintact

Steinebrueck

repair needed

58 Pz Corps Burg Reuland Ulflingen

Houffalize and Andenne-
Laroche. Namurintactintactintact

Ouren:

intact, smallcapacity.

Kalborn:

New-construction47 Pz Corps Dasburg and Clerf, Drauffeld and Namur-Givet
Gemund Encherange.new-construction intact

Concerning the nature of the area envisaged for the
attack the following must be kept in mind.⁴

The area was divided by the Maas into two parts of about the same size. Because of its breadth and depth and its steep banks this river represents a considerable obstacle. It had to be considered a precarious enterprise to build a bridge in full view of the enemy; consequently the bridges which

⁴ The essentials of this description of the terrain were taken from Schramm's report.

already existed were highly important - the more so because their number was very limited. In case the zone of attack at Namur should be extended to the south, the forces which were to cross the river up-stream had in addition to cross the Sambre, which flows into the Maas at Namur. But on the other hand, the Maas might mean a strong protection, when the attack had reached the bank and the enemy started his counterassaults.

The area between our front and the Maas is somewhat undulating, with hills rising to a height of more than 700 m; here and there it is mountainous. Characteristic of the nature of the terrain is on one hand its many forests and, on the other hand, its deep ravines, worn by numerous small rivers and streams. The Ourthe river is the most important, coming from the south and forming an S curve it flows into the Maas at Liege; it cuts the strip of attack almost vertically, and had consequently to be considered a serious obstacle if the enemy should manage to gain a hold on the opposite bank. Among other tributaries, the Semois, flowing into the Maas between Givet and Charleville, was also rather important as it offered excellent support for protection against attacks from the south. But unpleasant on the other hand was the presence of the Sauer river, which likewise flows in the same general direction east - west

but opposite to the Semois, thus obliquely cutting the area of advance of the 7 Army. At Wallendorf the Our flows into this river; from Dasburg it runs along the frontier between Germany and Luxemburg, and at the same time along our front line. The presence of the group of mountains south of Echternach compels the Sauer to describe a curve to the east southeast of Wallendorf before it flows into the Moselle at Wasserbillig. Owing to the fact that the enemy had occupied this curve he here had a position, which was a threat to the flank of our jump-off position. The deeply incised Our river, accessible only on hair-pin curves, had to be crossed by both the 5 Pz Army and the 7 Army right at the start of the attack. But no bridges of adequate capacity were available and what made a crossing very difficult, its water level changed very rapidly after the beginning of autumn; from one day to the other its width can increase considerably. No matter where and how we started the attack - on the left flank of our strip of attack (the 7 Army) we would meet very definite difficulties caused by nature.

On our right wing (the 6 Pz Army) the district of the Hohe Venn, a barely accessible swampland, presented a serious obstacle to our attack, especially to our tank attack; but on the other hand once captured it could be held by weak forces. In order to capture the district,

however, it was necessary first to take possession of the hills at Elsenborn south of Monschau. In the middle (the 5 Pz Army) the district of the Schnee Eifel blocked our advance, the one half of which the enemy held, and making it very difficult to launch a frontal attack on.

A comparison between the intended zones of attack of the two armies would show that up to the Maas the sector of the 6 Pz Army was shorter than that of the 5 Pz Army. Right at the outset the 6 Pz Army would have to contend with the two dangerous positions Elsenhorn and Hohes Venn. During this phase of the battle the 5 Pz Army would have the easiest job, if it managed to pass the Our without difficulty. But for this army the difficulties would arise during the second phase, during which the other one would already have prospects of reaching better terrain. For the 5 Pz Army would now have to fight its way through the Ardennes, which lay diagonally across its road of advance.

Through the attack in 1940 and the withdrawal in the autumn of 1944 the German leadership had acquired a detailed knowledge of the terrain. Consequently we were fully aware of the difficulties, if not dangers, which the narrow, winding roads could present to an offensive, particularly to one which had to be carried out in winter under bad weather conditions. Unless he were completely surprised it would be an easy thing for the enemy to delay our advance considerably.

by blasting the bridges, as a crossing at other points - if possible at all - would require long preparations, owing to the steep banks of the rivers. Consequently the condition of the bridges had to be reconnoitered repeatedly. But then again this meant there was danger that a too regular air reconnaissance might arouse the suspicion of the enemy.

It is true that the system of asphalt roads was not a tightly knit one, but there was an actual scarcity of roads only in some places. The difficulties lay rather in the fact that even the main roads had many steep slopes and sharp, hairpin curves. Owing to these we had to unhook the guns of the artillery and the antiaircraft artillery, the bridge equipment ponton trailers, and those carrying bridge building lumber, and haul them around the curves separately by means of winches.⁵ The steep slopes, when covered with ice, increased the danger of skidding, and because of this very often our vehicles left the road. The result was that our march was delayed and very often considerable road jams developed, which offered excellent targets to the planes of the enemy. It was often impossible to take cover in the adjacent woods during air alarms because we were unable to leave the roads whose bordering terrain was either mountainous or steeply sloping. Furthermore, the condition of our vehicles and prime

5 Further the roadway on many of the highway curves was so narrow that every tank had to back up first before it could make the turn.

movers was such that this could not be expected of them. In addition the craters in the roads and the demolitions and abatis, made during our retreat in 1944, delayed our march and caused road jams because we could not leave the road to avoid them.

In Germany proper the offices of the road surveyors had been instructed to help us. But very soon it turned out that, owing to numerous inductions into the Wehrmacht, they had only very few people available, and consequently we had to help ourselves. The actual help which we received consisted of the rendering available of sand, staking off of dangerous lengths of road, and shoring up the edges of the pavement where there was a danger of skidding. The large junctions, as for instance March, St. Hubert and Bastogne, were of great, though not decisive importance, as they could be bypassed if necessary.

The small forces, opposed to us, show that, owing to the nature of the terrain, the enemy did not expect a German large-scale operation in the sector of Eifel.

On the whole it can be said that the area selected for the attack offered great strategic advantages, but also as far as terrain was concerned numerous natural obstacles, which would affect our armored forces especially - and it being winter - perhaps to such a degree that our success would be rendered doubtful. It was indisputable that very extraordinary

demands would be put on the troops, equipment, (tanks, prime movers, motor vehicles, etc.), and horses.

Considering the general features of the terrain with its woods and ravines we presumed that, until we reached the open terrain after we had broken through the enemy positions the engagements would take place for the most part on and along the roads, and around the crossings of passes and rivers, because the dense forest would definitely diminish the possibilities for reconnaissance and, consequently, the effect of our weapons. Further we presumed that it would be difficult for the artillery and the antiaircraft artillery to select and occupy their emplacements, as hills and trees would limit the full effect of their guns. On the other hand the forests offered excellent camouflage possibilities for marching up along secondary approaches, for the assembly into position, and for the parking of motor transport columns of all kinds. Material for the repair of roads and bridges, was to be at hand everywhere, and the troops were to be equipped with tools for this.

Once more the course of the engagements proved that good training of the troops and direction by experienced leaders cannot be estimated highly enough: the troops successfully overcame all difficulties produced by the terrain or the season. The majority of the officers, a high percentage of the NCOs, and very many drivers had fought in Russia under

similar or even worse conditions. They were always able to contrive ways and means for less experienced soldiers, and thus contributed definite prerequisites for success.

The following railroads west of the Rhein were at our disposal for the bringing up of supplies. (I underline the names of the principal loading stations)

Cologne or Bonn - Euskirchen - Blankenheim - Stadtkyll.

The Ahrtal railroad: Ahrweiler - Hillesheim - Gerolstein - Pruem

The Moseltal railroad: Koblenz - Trier - with a branch line to Bitburg.

The railroads had been destroyed by air raids to such an extent that the trains were completely stopped or had to be rerouted.

During air raids we used the numerous tunnels for protection of the trains, but at last they were jammed full with trains and often we could not get urgently needed supplies because the tracks were blocked by other trains or by bomb damage. Often it took several hours to find the whereabouts of whole trains, because the railroad officials - eager to help - started off as many trains on the above-mentioned stretches from the Rhein to the west as the situation in the air or the darkness permitted. Officers, sent out by the Oberquartiermeister, then found them hidden somewhere, usually in the tunnels. Not until the trains were found could the

motor transport columns be brought up and consequently it was impossible to plan their movements beforehand.

The result was that the most urgently needed supplies were brought up with extraordinary, ⁶ severa delays. The greatest efforts were made to keep strategic railroad lines and the most important through stations open, and actually amazing results were achieved. But it could not be prevented that the wheels of the German war-machine turned slower than they used to.

For three reasons it was impossible to employ motor transport vehicles on a wide, grandiose scale to relieve the railroads:

1. All roads were threatened during daytime and moonlight nights.
2. The lack of fuel which compelled us to measure every cubic meter of it.
3. The scarcity and the bad condition of available vehicles.

The bringing up of the troops proceeded better than we had expected, considering the increasing air raids on the railroad system especially on junctions and large switching yards. In the area to the right of the Rhine we could only carry out our movements during the night and on rainy days

6 Thus it was inevitable that the responsible headquarters of the Army command had to keep exact track of every car-load of supply until it reached the troops.

- in as far as the roads were passable at all; but thanks to the close railroad system in the west, and still more to the work of the railroad personnel and the repair columns our efforts were crowned with success.

But this is only true of the troop transports. We could not prevent many of the trains with material from being either considerably delayed or getting completely stuck. As both the training of the troops and their fighting power depended on the arrival of these trains, the delays had a doubly unfavorable influence upon all units which were to take part in the offensive.

3. The Fighting Qualities of the Units:

For the estimate of our own situation as well as that of the enemy the fighting qualities of the units play just as important a part as, for instance, the abilities of leaders and troops, the use and manipulation of modern weapons, etc.

Organization, strength, armament and equipment all of which together make up the personnel and materiel bases do not alone determine the fighting qualities of a unit; the spiritual forces, which in turn are subject to physical and intellectual influences, also play a role.

Owing to the long duration of the war and the consequent exhaustion of forces the fighting qualities of the units of the German Army varied in every respect (personnel, materiel,

spiritual) with the Wehrmacht and also within the Army.

This was also the case in peacetime - I will show this later on - but it was not so perceptible as now that our soldiers were to undergo the hardest test.

Owing to the heavy losses it was no longer possible to keep the bulk of Army forces on the highest level with regard to combination of personnel, quality of officers, men, armament, equipment, etc. So during World War I, we now also proceeded to organize a number of units, at the disposal of the Highest Command, which were excellently equipped in men and materiel compared to the majority of the Army. We tried to keep these first-class units on the same original high level during the time following, and on the whole we managed to do so.

To these troops belonged, as far as this report is concerned, the armored troops of the Army, that is to say the Pz and Pz Gren Divisions, the units of the Waffen SS, and - according to the opinion of the Highest Command - the newly established Volks Gren Divisions, the latter mainly because of their composition and armament.

As the fighting qualities of the troops constitute one basis for all planning of operations and constitute a contributing, often even a decisive, factor, it is necessary to determine what the fighting qualities of the units were which took part in the attack.

a. Personnel.

Among the divisions definitely placed at our disposal the 18 and 26 Volks Gren Divisions were to be employed as permanent divisions in the future sector of attack under the 66 Army Corps commanding there. Both divisions had to defend broad sectors, and consequently were only able to detach a small number of local reserves, which hardly got any training because the tasks of forces such as these, stationed so near the front and alerted for action would not permit it. The reserves were assigned to the divisions from the field replacement battalions.

The 18 Volks Gren Division had good personnel replacements, an adequate number of young people, many of them of the Navy or the Luftwaffe without an infantry training. Most of the subordinate commanders had been in action on the eastern front, the others came from various arms of the Wehrmacht or were combed out of the Reserve Army, only very few were from the good army schools. The officers corps represented a good average, but part of them with no front experience, the young reserve officers had combat experience.

The 62 Volks Gren Division was a newly activated division having an incomplete training owing to the slow arrival of weapons and equipment. It had practically no training in firing with live ammunition; its heavy infantry guns did not

arrive until the last day. It was up to strength, but only 16% instead of 40% of the personnel consisted of young men. 15% of the men belonged to the "Volkstumsgruppe 3", and their orders were given in Polish or Czech.

The 560 Volks Gren Division was newly activated from the occupation troops in Norway and had had a three weeks' training in Denmark. The training was absolutely inadequate, as fire arms of all sorts only arrived at the last moment. Consequently they got no training in firing with live ammunition, and we could not make up for this later, as they were sent in as soon as they left the train. (On the 16 Dec one regiment, the Armored Infantry Battalion, and one engineer company had not arrived at all yet).

As this Volks Gren Division too was equipped with "Sturmgewehr 44" the lack of training in firing influenced the operations of the division unfavorably, despite the fact that every man was keen on fighting. The division was up to authorized strength.

Until the 5 Dec the 116 Pz Div had been repeatedly employed in the Roer sector, and its worth often proved it needed a complete freshening up. But the march into the assembly area and the preservation of secrecy necessary there allowed neither time nor opportunity for it. It had only a theoretical training, but got along with a small, excellent

cadre of officers, NCOs, and privates. It was almost up to strength.

The condition of the 2 Pz Division, also a division of the first wave, was more favorable. It had been almost completely destroyed in Normandy; a small detachment was afterwards employed with the 7 Army north of Dasburg, and since the 6 Nov it had been withdrawn for freshening up. It enjoyed all advantages of a division withdrawn from the combat line, with the following limitations as appeared later: a lack of possibilities of training, partly owing to the fact that the troops were quartered in the immediate neighborhood of the front line, partly out of consideration for the preservation of the element of surprise; a slow, very delayed arrival of weapons and equipment that were lacking; a scarcity of fuel; very crowded quarters. During the freshening up a small combat group was temporarily sent in in the Roer sector and suffered heavy losses. The division was up to authorized strength.

After having suffered heavy losses in Normandy the Pz Lehr Division was sent to Germany for freshening up, and remained there from the middle of September to the beginning of November. Ever since its formation it had been specially favored by the Inspector General of the Armored Forces. It could be considered almost fully reorganized. But from the 22 - 24 Nov it was sent in northwest of Saargemuend in the

area of the "G" Army Group for a limited objective attack and because of this at the beginning of the offensive had not regained its full fighting power.

The "Fuehrer Begleit Brigade" (Fuehrer's Escort Brigade) arrived - although behind time - at full strength with regard to both men and material.

Organization and numerical strength, however, do not give a true - because it is too optimistic - impression of the fighting qualities of the divisions as they differed from each other considerably in regard to age classes, combat experience, and condition of training, and this alone made them differ in combat strength, to some extent quite considerably.

Within the framework of this report I am only able to give the facts without discussing details or pointing out reasons and defects or ways and means to remedy the defects that brought about this situation.

The main point is: The Wehrmacht had now been waging war for five years.

The infantry - in this case also part of the Pz Gren Divisions is to be included - was too old. The average age of the men was 35 years.

We were unable to make up in kind for the losses at the front, and this forced us to improvisations, which were subject to all the disadvantages improvisations are always subject to. We raised the age limits, for instance, and

combed the units in the rear, the staffs, other arms of the Wehrmacht, security divisions, the polite, etc, because of general commitment of all troops in the field it was impossible to give these men an adequate training. It was still more fatal that the replacements were unacquainted with infantry operations and had not received an even approximately adequate arms training. The high number of NCOs, whom we had to enroll in the troops, could not be employed at the front according to their grade as the companies were small. A great number of the NCOs lacked training and combat experience, consequently we could not employ them in practical service with troops as leaders of groups, etc., and they had to serve as privates. Even for a makeshift this measure was wrong. The NCOs felt depressed and degraded, and became psychologically maladjusted. Their neighbors were young people still prepared to learn and adjust themselves and who, even with their level of training, placed within the secure framework of a group or assault detachment, would have fought, but they found neither this framework nor security among their neighbors. Thus this measure had an unfavorable effect on both NCOs and privates.

In some divisions the condition of the training of the troops no longer met the requirements necessary when facing an enemy numerically and materially superior, rested, and well nourished.

The estimate I give in paragraph III.3.e. of the fighting qualities of the troops, discussing whether they were qualified for the attack or not, makes it necessary, in connection with the foregoing, to point out that not all divisions were fit for an attack on this scale, and consequently it could be foreseen that an attack on this enemy would lead to situations such as are comprised only in an offensive operation envisaged to cover several days, to be driven deeply into the enemy lines, and having a distant objective. It is possible that the Highest Command - Hitler particularly - did not consider this fact sufficiently; this is the only way I can explain their calculations of timing for the development of the offensive. Any higher commander who knew the troops was aware of this defect and did not find my view strange. Since 1942 the Army had not carried out such offensive operations, and the officers who were now battalion commanders served as platoon or company leaders during the war of movement in Poland, France, and Russia in 1939 - 1941. At that time they had their specific tasks to perform within their company or battalion. Now they were to act independently, and master combat situations which in themselves already carried the germ of failure if they failed to find the necessary initiative in the subordinate commanders during the swift battles and the ever-changing combat situations, not to mention the golden rule of leadership:

He who waits for orders on the battlefield will be too late. A large number of regimental commanders, particularly of the infantry, Pz Grenadiers, and the artillery, lacked this faculty of being able to act by themselves, but it was generally true of the company, platoon, and group leaders. Static and defensive or withdrawing warfare had paralysed, to some extent, even killed their initiative. When it has been maintained in answer to this that the Pz Divisions of the Army and the Waffen-SS, and a part of the old divisions of the Army, had repeatedly taken part in offensive operations later as well and thus gathered experience, this objection does not invalidate the fact, since all these operations had more or less been "attacks with a limited objective," and consequently can not be compared to protracted mobile warfare, because they cannot give us the same experience. All their higher are the activities of all the superior commanders, up to the commanding generals, to be appraised, whose appearance and intervention on the battlefield assured the cooperation of the whole. Owing to the fact that all units and their commanders arrived at the very last moment it was utterly impossible to give the commanders (from Bn. to Div Commanders) a theoretical schooling. They unpeated map maneuvers could only explain the main principles and illustrate their application to the offensive; it was not possible to give the subordinate commands a part in this knowledge.

The condition of the training of the replacements - taken as a whole - likewise no longer met the demands which had to be put on the soldiers during this phase of the war. Considering the fact that the majority of the replacements would be sent in as soon as they arrived, the aim of the arms drill ought to have been to enable us to present the combat troops with soldiers well prepared for active front line service. We endeavored to attain this object, but the difficulties were so great that we generally failed to overcome them.

These shortcomings were ascertainable both in officers and NCOs, and consequently there was not always a feal feeling of solidarity and voluntary service on the part of their men when they came into contact with the enemy. Although numerous officers, NCOs, and men of every age, rank and seniority showed excellent military qualities, it cannot be denied that the absolute confidence which the men up till then had had in their superior officers in accordance with their preparation, selection, level of training, etc., was dwindling away.

The Pz Divisions of the Army and some old infantry divisions (among them the 12 and the 26 Volks Gren Divisions) managed to get along with an excellent - however small - cadre of war experienced personnel.

The Pz Troops were generally better off as: (1) they had their own training units - one training battalion to each Pz Gren Regiment, and one Pz Replacement Unit to each regiment; (2) these training units of the Replacement Army were subordinate to the Inspector General of Armored Troops.

The very great advantages of the Pz Troops were due to the fact that the officers and NCOs trained the replacements in Germany for service in the units in which they had served themselves and to which they would return to fight together with the men they had trained in the Replacement Army. In addition the Inspector General saw to it that the training remained in touch with the atmosphere of the front. The best, most successful way of doing this was the direct exchange of officers of the field units with those of the replacement units. The strong personal influence of the Inspector General was helpful here too, being felt in all training camps of the Pz troops, which, as centers of training and education, fructified both the field forces and the Replacement Army. The number of replacement units subordinate to him also made it possible for this deputies to supervise the training very often. The majority of the Army did not have these advantages, because in most cases the replacement units of the infantry, etc., did not know where they would be sent after having completed their training, as the state

of the war necessitated changes in the plans of the Commander of the Replacement Army. The result of this was that the field forces of the infantry were not as interested in an exchange of first-class training personnel as were the Pz troops, because the officers and NCOs given up for training purposes were for the most part lost to the field forces.

In May 1944 I was present at the demonstration of a unit; I there met a great number of officers who were responsible for the training of the Replacement Army, and I got the impression that they were no longer entirely equal to the task. Part of the officers of all ranks were much too old, not mobile enough, unacquainted with the front, and had far too little contact with their troops; others were handicapped by their wounds.

The high losses in officers and NCOs, and the extraordinary decrease in all kinds of training material further reduced the prospects of giving the Replacement Army a successful training, useful in the field.

Also the quality of officers and NCOs varied noticeably. Although the losses in Pz Grenadiers were the highest compared to all other units, and although the Armored Command had suffered very heavy losses, the officers and NCOs of the Armored Forces were still better than those of the majority of the Army at that time (Dec 1944). This fact is explained

not only by the great number of volunteers, and the carefully selected replacements, but is due to two further circumstances.

The Pz troops (Pz regiments, Pz Gren Regiments, reconnaissance battalions) and their officers for the most part had originated in the cavalry, and got their officer, reserve officer, and volunteer replacements from regiments and recruiting areas with definite traditions which were transmitted. In a technical age young men volunteered for the motorized branch of the service in such large numbers that the units could make a selection. The successes of this arm in 1939-41 were such that even during the war the stream of volunteers was not exhausted.

Further it was a particular source of power that wounded officers, NCOs and men after having recovered, of their own accord, exerted themselves to the utmost to get back to their old outfits and not to be transferred to the Replacement Army. Despite all orders of the Highest Command all commanders of the Pz troops supported such efforts; and they did not fail to reap a reward therefrom.

But these facts alone do not explain the better quality of the officers and NCOs of the Pz troops.

As far as I am able to ascertain the schools of the Pz troops had a speedier and stronger influence upon the field troops, as they had only 40 divisions to instruct, in contrast

to the great number of units attending the infantry schools. At the time they were organized the Pz schools also enjoyed all privileges of the new arm, which not until many difficulties had been overcome, it is true, the Head of the State ordered specially favored by the High Command. With this, and stimulated again and again by their good morale and by their successes, they managed to get along until the end.

The differences in the quality of the regular officers and those commissioned for the duration - in my opinion were only due to the fact that part of the latter - from company commanders upwards - were not adequately trained. For getting an appointment as a battalion or regimental commander, experience as combat leader, proving of leadership qualities before an enemy, physical and mental agility, as well as talent, decide whether the officer to be selected can coordinate the various arms in combat; in these posts a great number of officers commissioned for the duration proved themselves excellently before the enemy. Only a small number of them, however, were suitable for posts as division commanders, because they did not master the cooperation of all arms in the combat field as did the regular officers who had been trained in first-class Army schools in peacetime. Both categories of officers took part in the same course of instruction for training as platoon and company leaders in the

service schools. In the front line an equal percentage of both groups proved their skill as platoon and company leaders.

At the outset we still managed to improve the defective training of retrainees and individuals "combed out" from other places in the Army Service Schools or divisional combat schools of the replacement training battalions. After the beginning of the Invasion in the west this was no longer possible for the divisions to the same extent, because, owing to the constant costly engagements, they had to send in their replacements of all kinds to stop up desperate gaps before they had completed their scheduled training.

The only method effectively to remove these deficiencies with the purpose of giving the divisions an adequate training for their future tasks was to extract them and give them a freshening up under conditions which were favorable for instruction and training. This was what Ludendorff had been able to do with the attack divisions before the large-scale attacks in March and May 1918.

Only to a very limited extent could the divisions in position complete the training planned for their replacements among the reserves and in the replacement training battalions. Being quartered in the immediate vicinity of the front the former were so burdened with other tasks that it was almost impossible to think about training. These tasks were the

following:

Improvement of the positions,

Improvements of the quarters of the reserves,

Improvements of the roads,

Procurement of all sorts of building and combat material.

Further, owing to the breadth of the sectors assigned to the units, they often had to be kept available as reserves, or had to reinforce the security guards during darkness. In an area so close upon the front next to nothing could be done for the improvement of their marksmanship. This is true of the 18 and the 26 Volks Grenadier Divisions.

Even if sometimes and in certain sectors the divisions in position had to some extent enjoyed what the soldiers call a "rest," it must be kept in mind that the demands made upon the leadership and troops up till then had been quite extraordinary, as they had been either sent in or kept in reserve as a so-called "fire department" by the Corps, the Army, or the Army Group, also during the periods when, by the Highest Command, they were supposed to be rested; consequently they never had a real freshening up. This was true of the 116 Pz Division, the 3 and the 15 Pz Gren Divisions.

The Pz Lehr Division and the 2 Pz Division were better off, although the former had had losses in men and material after having been temporarily sent in in the sector of the "G" Group of Armies.

As to composition, numerical and material strength, and the quality of its personnel the Fuehrer Escort Brigade surpassed all other units. It had been formed from the replacement brigade "Grossdeutschland" with the best officers, NCOs, and privates, and equipped with the most modern weapons and equipment. Till now the majority had served as guards at the Fuehrer Headquarters. The officers were highly experienced in the practical service with troops. The brigade only lacked march technique, and had not been trained in the cooperation of arms on the battlefield.

Apart from the numerical and material strength, composition combat experience, condition of training, etc., also the filling up of the posts as commanders has an influence upon the fighting qualities.

As to its composition the Operations Section of the Army Staff met all requirements. It has proved excellent skill. The Staff was composed of general staff officers, who all had experience in the practical service with troops, particularly with the Pz troops. The strategic assembly took place under very difficult conditions, and, with a view to the preservation of the element of secrecy, it was planned exclusively by the G3. Thanks to the Staff, the assembly was carried out exactly according to his plan and without any friction. As the supply, recovery, and repair services of the Pz troops belong to the combat troops they also needed a tactical leadership. Generally

they were directed by the Army, because only the Army knew of the tactical conditions and the changing situations, and was able to foresee which unit urgently needed weapons, ammunition, and fuel, and which roads were suitable for the transport. The more scantily the supplies arrived to the Army, the more the Operations Section had to take care of the distribution. The question of fuel took on the importance of an actual commanding organ - and even of a weapon. As a matter of fact since about the 23 Dec fuel was distributed by the cubic meter.

At all times the general staff officers had a correct judgement of the situation, and often they verified it by visiting the troops. Without exception I think that general staff officers must have such a knowledge.

The Senior Artillery Commander, the Army Engineer Commander, and the Army Signal Commander - all of them selected for the task - and their staffs lent excellent assistance, when the offensive was prepared and launched.

On the occasion of the first conference (on the 2 Nov), I asked the Commander in Chief in the West to put the Commanding Generals Krueger (of the 58 Pz Corps) and Frhrr. von Luettwitz (of the 47 Pz Corps) at my disposal for the conduct of the attack. He promised to do so. They were the most suitable Pz leaders in the western theater of war, and they brought experienced staffs with them. Both generals put their

comprehensive experience fully at our disposal. On the battlefield their personalities and their experience in practical service with troops as commanders in and of Pz divisions (the 1 and the 2 Pz Divisions) exerted a very strong influence.

The 66 Army Corps was a static corps, and its Commanding General was rather old; of course the mobility of a combined arms unit composed and conducted in such a way was considerably inferior to that of the two Pz Corps.

Not until a late moment was I informed of the numbers of the infantry divisions which were subordinated to me for the attack. I could not exert my influence upon the filling up of the posts as commanders; but by order of Hitler I could arrange those of the Pz divisions by immediate arrangements with the Army Personnel Office. I had the Commander of the 2 Pz Division replaced by Col von Lauchert, an experienced commander from the east. In cooperation with the excellent First General Staff Officer of the Division, he could be expected to be equal to the task. Unfortunately he did not arrive to the Army until the 14 December.

During the defensive combat west of the Maas and west of the Roer the Commander of the 116 Pz Division had repeatedly proved his skill. As yet he had not conducted the attack of a Pz division.

The CO of the Pz Lehr Division was a good commander, having been a member of the General Staff for several years,

and he was capable of thought and action on a grand scale. But he did not possess the strictness necessary to exert authority over his subordinates. The latter were especially selected for their tasks within the Division. They knew that, and tended to act on their own, because their leader was not firm enough.

The CO of the Fuehrer Escort Brigade had been an excellent battalion commander, and would probably have made an equally fine regimental commander, if he had been allowed to develop his abilities. But he was not yet ripe for the rank to which he had been promoted in connection with the political events on the 20 July 1944.

The CO of the 18 Volks Gren Brigade had distinguished himself as a commander of an assault brigade, and became afterwards leader of the school of this arm; there his work was exemplary. He had not yet had the opportunity of establishing working contact with his division in the field. The cooperation of all elements of his division was either bad or incomplete.

The CO of the 62 Volks Gren Division was as little qualified for an attack as his troops. He lacked combat experience. The cooperation of all elements of his division was incomplete, and failed when the object was to exploit a local success.

The CO of the 560 Volks Gren Division was inexperienced, and his troops were not homogeneous,

The CO of the 26 Volks Gren Division as well as his troops were qualified for the task assigned to them.

The word "Obduracy" will be used several times. By this expression is meant both obduracy against one's self (physical and mental) and obduracy in the carrying out of the mission.

This involves:

- a. obduracy against the difficulties caused by the lack of men and material.
- b. obduracy against the inclemencies of the weather and the season.
- c. obduracy against the inconveniences caused by the war (as for instance lack of shelters, clothing, and food.)
- d. obduracy against the difficulties caused by the terrain.
- e. obduracy against the weaknesses of subordinates; these might be : lack of experience, assurance, skill, ability, temperament, etc.
- f. obduracy against the troops and their wishes in situations, during which the care for the troops must temporarily be of less importance than the demands of the mission.
- g. obduracy against the changing situations of such breakthrough operations (exaggerated reports, open flanks, temporarily jeopardized lines of communication, etc).

It would be wrong to think that this "obstinacy" meant incapability of understanding the difficulties and disadvantages mentioned above. But on the other hand, I consider

the possession of this obstinacy one of the qualities necessary to a military leader on the battlefield, because the point always is to exploit a local success vigorously and without hesitation, so that the enemy is unable to gain time; the skillful leader is able to increase the effect of such an operation considerably. Compared to World War I the power of a personality on the battlefield has not diminished, despite the higher effect of the weapons; during World War II this power was often decisive.

b. Material.

In Paragraph II.3.p.34 I mentioned how the continuous, heavy defensive combat in the Roer sector impaired the refitting of the divisions and diminished our stores of artillery ammunition and fuel. The amount of weapons, equipment, and tanks to be supplied was also considerably diminished owing to the difficulties of production or the bad condition of the railroad system, and consequently we were unable to give our troops an adequate training. Not only the units stationed in the zone of operations suffered, but also the troops in Germany and the occupied countries, which were new-activated under the Commanding General of the Replacement Army. Details will be given later on. It is a fact that the heavy weapons, as for instance tanks, artillery, and antiartillery guns, and also other weapons, equipment and ammunition had the quality which could be expected from

the badly damaged German armament industry, which in the sixth year of the war lacked a part of the raw material for its production. Incidents of sabotage of the supplies for the front on a large scale did not occur. If such incidents occurred in the armament industry - which I do not know - the defective weapons were picked out by the control stations before they reached the front.

It is true that the amount of motor vehicles at our disposal was inadequate, but still worse was the fact that the condition of the vehicles at hand was such that it was absolutely necessary to exchange them for better ones. The motor vehicles used for towing the guns and trailers and all trucks had been employed for years in all theaters of war. For the old fashioned vehicles of various types (71 types in one division) we had hardly any spare parts and had to patch up with inferior material; in addition we had a large number of private vehicles, which could only travel on good roads. Without support from the highest commands my Army would not be able to alter the situation. In order to improve it we ordered to: (a) diminish the amount of impediments, that is to say only the most necessary baggage would be transported; (b) that only vehicles fit for the terrain would be used; (c) that the number of types of vehicles was to be diminished in order to improve the supply of spare parts.

The radio operators were generally inadequately trained - except those of the armored forces; the result of this was that the radio service was bad and the messages delayed.

The reasons for all this were: too many types of radio equipment, the radio silence necessary for the preservation of the element of surprise, and the lack of radio sets for training purposes.

Details:

Infantry weapons and their ammunition: The Volks Gren Divisions were equipped with the "Sturmgewehr 44." The 62 and 560 Divisions got their weapons shortly before they were marched off to the assembly area, and consequently the carriers were unable to acquire an adequate firing technique. After the unloading in the assembly area we had neither ammunition, time nor opportunity for training, officers and men, therefore, were completely unacquainted with firing technique and the cooperation between riflemen or groups.

The supply of ammunition for our heavy mortars was scanty and remained so.

The regiments and battalions mostly lacked trained engineer troops, and the engineer battalions of the divisions had to take over their tasks. This meant a scattering of our forces which repeatedly had a decisive influence on our operations.

The equipment of the engineer forces of the divisions was incomplete, and their rendering mobility inadequate, considering the numerous tasks they would have to fulfill during the coming operations. We then transported so-called engineers by truck, but the same vehicle had to return to pick up their equipment. The absolutely inadequate equipment of the bridge-building columns was discussed in the conference with Hitler on the 2 December. A great number of men and vehicles from the "Organization Todt" were promised, but the promise was never kept. The men, moreover, were too old to endure the hardships.

Thus it took us considerably longer time than planned to clear the mines, remove road blocks, make the roads passable by filling up the craters, and clear passages through destroyed towns and villages (Houffalize, Laroche).

The artillery of the Volks Gren Divisions and even that of the Pz Divisions were equipped with type "East" caterpillar tractors. This vehicle was in itself vulnerable, and no spare parts could be obtained in the west. Furthermore, the drivers were inexperienced in driving because of the lack of fuel. Artillery units made mobile in such a way can never keep pace with a Pz division. Betimes the divisions therefore exchanged the tractors for captured trucks, and the 62 Volks Gren Division used horses.

In general the artillery lacked signal equipment, especially portable radio sets and wires. Shortly before the beginning of the attack the most urgent need was met by an extra supply. A reserve of material did not exist. The enormous boxes were difficult to handle, they were fragile and therefore not suitable for use by the troops. That was the opinion of everybody who had to use them on the battlefield. This is also my opinion.

The rendering mobile of the artillery was so insufficient that, highly to the disadvantage of the attack, I resolved to leave a considerable part of the Army artillery and the mortar brigades in their jump off positions, in order to put all the tractors at the disposal of the artillery of the divisions and the bridge building columns. To me it seemed to be more to the purpose to give the artillery which was sent in together with the divisions a good supply of ammunition than to have many guns with little ammunition available. This reserved artillery was to be brought up later on. When we needed it there was no fuel left.

A pronounced lack of ammunition only occurred temporarily during the battle of Bastogne, but here and there there was a certain scantiness of it. It was a welcome help to us when we captured three ammunition dumps (two with American ammunition and one former German dump east of Marche). During the entire offensive we lacked ammunition for our smoke shell mortars.

The slight capacity of the columns in the Army's batteries together with the long distances prevented the troops serving in the dumps from replacing the consumed ammunition. For the same reasons the supply of ammunition for the tactical employment of the artillery could not be kept at such a high level of mobility as the artillery units desired.

The antiaircraft artillery had an adequate supply of ammunition and - whenever its tasks permitted - it willingly offered support to the artillery in combat on the ground. Its level of mobility was good.

Both artillery observation battalions were only partly mobile; one of them was even horse-drawn.

On the 16 December the Pz troops moved into position with the following numbers of tanks (types "IV" and "V"):

116 Pz Division	about 70
2 Pz Division	about 60
Pz Lehr Division	about 70 - 80
Fuehrer Escort Brigade	70 of the 100 it had.
26 Volks Gren Div	14 assault guns
18 Volks Gren Div with one Assault Gun Brigade subordinated	42 "
62 Volks Gren Div	14 assault guns

560 Volks Gren Div

14 assault guns (did not
arrive until the 19 Dec.)

350-360 armored vehicles.

The utilization of the armored forces cannot be separated from the organization of the supply services. In the armored forces they belong to the field forces as for instance the off horses belong to the cavalry. Therefore they also needed a tactical leadership. The campaigns in the east and in Africa had taught us this golden rule, but during the offensive in the Ardennes we could not act according to this rule, because the repair and recovery services were insufficiently equipped with spare parts, traveling cranes, etc., and because the level of mobility was absolutely inadequate. In addition the lack of fuel prevented them from closely following the armored forces. The high number of tanks demolished during our retreat in January 1945 is due to the inadequate repair service and the lack of fuel. I remember that we lost five times as many tanks because of the lack of recovery vehicles than through an enemy fire.

The armored forces, also, lacked columns for transport of fuel.

In view of the mission and the nature of the terrain and the season I had asked for a quintuple issue of motor fuel, but the divisions only got from 1 1/2 to 1 3/4 of a single issue. It was not a matter of shortage of fuel really, but of

transport space for it. It was impossible by now to smooth out the difficulties of supply. On the contrary in fact: when the enemy air force was sent in we suffered losses on the roads and railways which decisively - in the true sense of the word - influenced our operations. For details see paragraph V.1.

The 18 Volks Gren Division: had 90% of its material refitted. One assault gun brigade was subordinated to it. The mobile detachment was partly equipped with bicycles. The horses were overworked.

The 62 Volks Gren Division: was up to strength as to material, but had no antiaircraft company. The rifle company (reconnaissance company) was on bicycles.

The 560 Volks Gren Division: was up to strength as to material but lacked supply services. The horses were too weak.

The 26 Volks Gren Division: was up to strength as to material. Its mobile detachment was partly equipped with bicycles.

The Pz Division: Two of the four Pz Gren Battalions had bicycles as motor vehicles were lacking. One battalion was to be transported on armored personnel carriers; only the Pz Lehr Division had a complete equipment, elsewhere there was a scarcity of these special vehicles. The armored reconnaissance detachments were very scantily equipped with track-laying vehicles.

I regret to say that not until May 1945 was I informed, by the report of Schramm, that Hitler had issued orders to the effect that the Pz divisions of the Waffen-SS be given double the normal number of tanks and armored vehicles (on the 24 December), the 6 SS Pz Army, therefore, got 250 new tanks. Nobody told me this in Berlin on the 2 December, although I urgently begged Hitler to bring my Pz divisions up to strength, but he refused.

The Signal Regiment of the Army, which at the same time had to serve the Artillery Commander of the Army (Heeres), was not up to strength as to material.

The Air Force Liaison Officer and his staff were very well equipped.

An adequate amount of maps was at our disposal.

Despite repeated requests only a limited number of aerial photographs arrived at the Headquarters and the Army on the day before the attack. The photographs only covered the terrain of the combat area to a very limited extent.

As to quantity and quality the articles of clothing corresponded to the limitations of the sixth year of the war. The divisions which were to be freshened up could not be adequately replaced. The field troops had an adequate amount of winter clothing and camouflage equipment at their disposal.

The food supply was likewise in accordance with the limitations which were imposed on the fortress of Germany.

Captured rations were therefore always very welcomed by the troops. It is not true that the leadership took captured food supply into consideration, neither did we reckon on captured motor fuel. The campaigns in the east, Africa, and Italy had clearly shown how easily such stores are destroyed by the enemy. Moreover, we did not know of such stores as for instance the big one at Stavelot (?).

c. Morale.

Apart from personnel and material, morale must be taken into consideration when an evaluation of the fighting qualities is to be given; morale is subjected to mental and physical influences.

To me it seems necessary to give an outline of the morale of our troops, in order to be able to investigate the reasons for the fact that troops possessing extraordinary fighting qualities shortly afterwards declined to such a degree that they hardly offered any resistance, and many of them ceased to fight.

Among other things I can mention the following which exerted an unfavorable influence on the physical strength of the soldiers.

Although the zone of interior and the superiors in the front line did their utmost for the field troops the general state of health was declining - particularly that of the young age classes owing to inadequate food rations. It is true that

at the outset such cases were exceptional, but later on the number of those sick or otherwise incapable of action increased considerably, since the replacements were undernourished. In the army of the interior zone they had for months had considerably smaller food rations than the field troops, and they arrived at the front in a state of health which did not allow us to supplement their incomplete training.

An increasing number of soldiers belonging to old age classes were called to service in the infantry, Pz Grenadier, or engineer units. Their state of health caused serious concern, and naturally they were in no way equal to the task. A high percentage was constantly sick or otherwise incapable of action.

As regards the young soldiers of the troops either sent in or kept in reserve the officers were anxious to give them an opportunity of getting an adequate rest. But the tasks of the "resting" commands were so numerous that the time for resting was rather limited. Serious consequences did not fail to appear (Cf. also p.133).

The state of health was also unfavorably influenced by the extreme scarcity of underwear, clothing of all kinds, boots, etc., and the impossibility of having the underwear, etc., cleaned. Physical exertion (as for instance marches, combat, digging of positions, nights without sleep) and the inclemencies of the weather gradually broke down the health of the men.

But apart from those actually sick we had a large number of malingerers. No doubt, experienced officers and NCOs took care of their troops in a more experienced way, so that the general state of health in their units did not sink to the same low level as in those having inexperienced commanders; but their number was small. Thus the state of health caused grave concern, and it was doubtful whether the soldiers were equal to their future tasks.

But the influences on the morale of officers and men gave me much more reason for grave concern. As they are important factors of an estimate of the fighting qualities, I here give an outline.

The continuous commitment had undermined the confidence of the "front soldiers" - officers and men - in the Highest Command. They did not more believe in the "reserves" and "re-organized units" so often announced. "He served continuously in the front line, and remained there," and his neighbors and men on leave from other fronts told him that the same was true of them. "Where were the reserves, and when would they arrive at this front, which had to be withdrawn whenever it was seriously attacked?" The official communique - which he had learnt to read thoroughly and catch the sense thereof - reported on the situation on the other fronts of the fortress of Germany, and just spoke about "disengagements." In his "own world," that is to say, his company, village, or sector - he found a

confirmation of his doubts as regards reserves and reinforcements, etc. The gaps were insufficiently filled up with young men - "combed out" or "retrained," or rather they should have been retrained - with old men of the police forces, people who had been picked up from straggler points; beside them battalions composed of men who had returned from leave; one battalion composed exclusively to consist of people having stomach diseases; also young men of the Luftwaffe came to the infantry, which astonished "him" as he had volunteered for the air force. "Did the Luftwaffe not need them? Why not? Had the Luftwaffe an adequate number of crews available, and would voluntarily give up these young men, despite an increased production - report had it that we had begun a mass production of jet aircraft. Something was wrong. "His doubts were confirmed by what he saw in "his world." The Luftwaffe was not there any longer.

Thus these incompletely trained, young volunteers of the Luftwaffe came to their outfit. And they did not only feel depressed but they were also disappointed. The "world" in which they were now placed and to which - so many of them hoped and believed at the outset - the young people would soon become acclimated was heterogeneous in every respect: great differences in years, few "seasoned soldiers" - where were they? - few officers but very many NCOs, a part of them serving as privates; most of the latter came from staffs, other

arms or branches of the Wehrmacht: and they cursed and swore at the soldiers. And what was worse, these people had for 3, 4 or even 5 years served in staffs, security, guard or police detachments, and they cursed because "now they had come to the front, which they did not want at all, and at a moment when the war was practically over. Until now they had occupied safe positions, and there they wanted to stay."

Whether young or old, experienced or not, all men understood this: a part of the officers and the NCOs did not know what they could be expected to know as leaders of platoons companies, etc. They were "combed out" themselves, too old or, if they were young, without a careful training for their tasks as leaders on the battlefield. "The seasoned soldier who could keep the gang together was lacking." They were not animated by the fighting spirit which binds a fighting unity together. They lacked all moral stamina, there was no esprit de corps, although the company was called "a unit" the men did not feel and think and act as one.

In addition "he" saw and heard many things: the weak troops holding our own positions, the insufficiency of the West Wall, the stripping of which the rank and file could understand (all wire entanglements, all weapons, almost all appointments, armored doors, etc. were removed), further the excellent equipment of both the British and American PWS.

"Were the submarines, the modern weapons on which the official communiqus repeatedly reported, and the V-weapons after all not so successful?"

Because of their great success in different theaters of war the old divisions (among them the 12 and the 26 Volks Gren Divisions, and most of the Pz troops) had traditions which exerted a favorable influence on morale. They were held in honor by the soldiers who had served for a long time with the units and were stimulated by the recovered who returned from the hospitals. In the replacement units of the Pz troops the divisional traditions were especially cultivated, and they were also stressed in the schools of this branch of the Army.

The better and more complete special service equipment, which the newly activated units had to do without, had a favorable influence upon the soldiers of the old divisions.

The slowly and unreliably working mail service had an unfavorable influence, especially because the men heard about the bombing of their homes, and saw the enemy planes making for Germany in broad daylight without being effectively attacked. The uncertainty as regards the fate of their families was more keenly felt by the married soldiers than by the young, unmarried ones; but they, too, were mentally excited.

Of course the cancellation of leaves affected each soldier, even if leave was occasionally granted to one and another of the company. Individual leaves in urgent cases did not change

the feelings of the soldiers.

The attitude of the German population west of the Rhine shed a glaring light on the possible attitude of the population in the zone of the interior if they were to be submitted to a fateful, soul trying crisis. They were sick of the war and they openly expressed their sentiments to the divisions stationed there. Neither was the attitude of the "Volkssturm" suited to confirm the belief of the field troops that Germany was ready to fight to the bitter end.

Moral strength, which is sustained by bodily and spiritual influences, was insufficient as I have pointed out. So it is no wonder that these spiritual influences which should have strengthened the moral strength had no effect and proved lacking in most cases, in some cases even harmful, because they rested on insufficient or false assumptions: I have in mind here the work of the National Socialist Guidance Staff of the Wehrmacht which, with all its organizations, reached to the lowest echelons. Their message and the methods were misguided.

The confidence in the Highest Leadership disappeared rapidly, and no credence was given to the promises, no matter how cleverly they were disguised as "assertions."

The morale of the Pz and Pz Gren Divisions was at that time generally more uniform and firm than that of the majority of the Army. This fact is due partly to exterior circumstances and partly to the historical development: better reinforcements,

excellent weapons, a large number of volunteers, traditions, better special services, and the many soldiers of various ranks who returned from the hospitals. As the units of the Armored Forces (not only of the tank weapon) had their own replacement units in Germany and received large numbers of recovered soldiers - as I have already pointed out - they, too, were generally more homogeneously organized than other units of the Army.

The knowledge that the Pz units had to lead the attack, and consequently had to be committed at all critical points, produced a healthy pride in that branch of the service, a keen consciousness of responsibility, a strong devotion to duty, and an extraordinary eagerness for action, which were further strengthened by the fact that the Pz divisions (or elements of them) received privileged treatment from the leadership of the Army or the Corps in the distribution of artillery guns, smoke shell mortars, and airplanes. These feelings were strongly supported by the excellent way in which officers and NCOs behaved on the battlefield. The men had confidence in the abilities of their leaders of all ranks.

Furthermore, the fact that the Pz units were employed as a "fire department" made the static divisions in many cases consider them as deliverers from evil. They were popular and respected. This again increased the self-confidence and consciousness of responsibility of the Pz units. The "old men"

of the divisions, the combat experienced corporals and sergeants, set as fine an example as the majority of the NCOs and officers. These again had confidence in their superiors (regimental or division commanders), the selection of whom was easier in the Pz units than in other branches of the Army since they had a greater number of suitable personalities at their disposal. About the majority of these commanders it can be said that they "knew their job." But the war had lasted very long, and this fact was clearly felt when one considered the commanders of almost all units of the Army - except the Pz units. No wonder, the Wehrmacht had been organized rapidly and rashly, and at the beginning of the war and during the same the organizations had been puffed up when all the new units were activated. With this branch of the service, which was called "fast mobile troops," later on the term was changed to "armored troops" (Pz Truppe), a new idea of leadership came into existence. It originated in the Pz troops, and proved its truth in all theaters of the war. This arm developed in its leaders of all ranks a keen consciousness of responsibility, and the ability to think and to act independently, and the success it achieved during the years 1939 - 1941 produced eagerness for action, and joy in making decisions. When facing the enemy on the battlefield there is no indecision, and here "leaders" were developed. Owing to the small number of the units, these leaders could be found easier and more surely

in the Pz troops than in the main body of the Army.

The knowledge that they would always be sent in at decisive points compelled the leaders to give their troops a thorough-going and careful training. The officer corps showed fairness in effort, thought and act. Their candor was clearly shown in their reports.

If, therefore, in the sixth year of the war officers and men of the Pz troops were still excellent, the reason for this was that the men firmly trusted their superiors and comrades, and they knew that they would not let them down. He gave little credence to the high-sounding phrases about the "miracle weapons" and "a strategy which would change the war." For the rank and file the behavior of the officers on the battlefield was decisive and set an example.

Statements given by members of the former Wehrmacht after the unconditional surrender cannot shake my opinion, and above I have stated what my soldiers told me when I was among them.

Despite many unfavorable influences on morale, the successful resistance in the Roer sector against a much superior enemy gave the men the consciousness that their "Watch on the Rhine" still stood fast, and that they helped their comrades, who were heavily engaged on the eastern frontier of Germany and, furthermore, they knew that by their endurance the Highest Leadership gained time to make new decisions. This consciousness strengthened them.

To my opinion the following will explain the reasons why the men, the detachments, the battalions were able to achieve such results as proved by the attack and the breakthrough:

1. The belief that Hitler would "master the situation in any case," since the "official" information spoke about modern weapons, a large-scale commitment of new types of German aircraft, a great number of new submarines on all oceans, increased industrial production etc. "He" - the soldier himself - had nothing to lose; since the fall of 1944 there was hardly any family in Germany which had not lost some of its members. He, too, believed the "official" propaganda, which told him that in all probability the enemy would enslave the German people in case of a victory.

The soldier in the frontline, therefore, looked for a way out.

2. The man in the frontline would not be inferior to the civilian population of Germany, where young and old worked on most difficult conditions, risking their healths and even their lives. This obliged every man to strain every nerve.

3. His confidence in his leaders and their skill. Until now they had not demanded impossibilities from him, they shared his fate, and they never gave orders which they were unable or not ready to carry out themselves.

d. Freshening up - Brief freshening up.

Unlike the divisions of the Waffen-SS, which were employed with the 6 Pz Army during the attack, the attack divisions of the 5 Pz Army got no breathing space for a freshening up of men and material, despite the fact that they had been heavily engaged for weeks.

The freshening up of personnel was generally carried out by the replacement training battalions, which were the training centers of the divisions. In the "Division Combat Schools" they had a means of training which passed on to the replacements the experiences made during the last engagements, and which gave them "the last combat drill."

During the last year of the war the critical situation at the front more and more often compelled the leadership of the divisions to transmit the replacements, which were assigned to them by higher commands, to the units as soon as they had had a superficial training in the replacement training battalions; during the last months they even had to give up this training and transmit the replacements immediately to the units.

A pertinent, that is a systematic, training according to branch and time available for the training in the replacement training battalions definitely depended on the availability of adequate training personnel, local training facilities (suitable terrain, two or three schoolrooms), and an adequate

amount of time. Experienced division commanders always kept a cadre of training personnel in the replacement training battalions; along with this they could grant some of the combatants a possibility of getting rest and relaxation after the heavy engagements.

But in the course of time training material (ammunition, hand grenades, entrenching tools, motor fuel) became so scanty that not even improvisations were of any use.

When sheltering a replacement training battalions, suitable terrain, schoolrooms, and good shelters must be taken into consideration, because these factors are indispensable for a successful training. In the west and in the combat zones of Germany the number of these necessary facilities decreased considerably in 1944, so that the training of our scanty replacements was considerably hampered.

In addition the troops spent much time and energy on the carrying out of tasks assigned to them by higher commands. I here enumerate some of them:

The digging of positions in the rear. Generally this had to be done during darkness because of the danger of air-raids.

Briefing, training maneuvers, or alarm exercises in various cases of supposed landings of airborne enemy troops.

In the western and eastern areas, bordering on the Rhine, where the main body of the replacement training battalions

were stationed, maneuvers - even with very small detachments - were almost impossible, owing to the danger of air raids.

The bad physical condition of the men, caused by the scanty food rations, limited the possibilities of training them.

As long as the training had to be carried out in the rear, the perceptible and serious deficiencies of the training in firing could not be smoothed out, as no terrain suitable for combat practice firing was available there.

Despite the industrious work of staffs and commanders, as of 1944 it was no longer possible to transfer men and material to the divisions, which were to be freshened up, at so early a time that they were ready when the divisions arrived. Especially for the divisions which were to get a so-called "brief freshening up" this was a severe blow, as they could be expected to be employed again shortly after their arrival.

Many of the divisions which had just had a freshening up lacked very important equipment. The same was true of many of the newly activated units, as for instance the Volks Gren Divisions.

But also many other things, which make a freshening up what it ought to be, were lacking: clothing, underwear, boots, patching, food reserves, etc.

Owing to all this the fighting qualities of the units were bound to sink to a seriously low level if the troops were not enabled to incorporate their replacements according

to the table of organization. This would be impossible during the engagements. As the situation was serious at all fronts and in all sectors, the divisions could not be withdrawn for a fairly long time, but had to be submitted to the so-called "brief freshening up." As signified by the term, this was only an improvisation with all its disadvantages. But it might have been of some advantage if - apart from time - we could meet all other requirements which are necessary for a systematic, however short, freshening up. But generally this was not the case. Transports of replacements arrived slowly, and generally the troops were inadequately equipped with weapons and material. Training material as well as motor fuel was not supplied. Terrain suitable for maneuver exercises and offering fields of fire was not available. In addition, these units had also tasks to fulfill as reserves, and thus their leaders with all their organizations and staffs were fully occupied with the carrying out of briefing, reconnaissance, and establishing of communication; they could not, therefore, attend to the training and freshening up of their troops to the extent which was necessary, considering the great deficiencies. Furthermore, elements of the unit, intended as combat groups, had to hold themselves ready for employment within two hours, and consequently their training was practically rendered impossible.

Finally I must point out the fact that the units of the Army (des Heeres) had not been freshened up, provided they

did not come from the German zone of interior. More or less all of them lacked forces in men and materiel. These forces were not only desirable but also necessary. Necessary, because we endeavored to achieve a success, which was to be the objective of the attack; a change of the war in the west.

The main point of the training for the offensive was combat practice, above all training in firing. In the first place counterattack with the supposition that the enemy had penetrated into our own positions had to be practiced. This additional supposition was made with a view to the measures of camouflage.

In using the method of attack, which I described elsewhere, the commitment of the assault companies played a very important part. Consequently the training of them during the whole period of preparation was particularly necessary. Such companies were organically incorporated into the Volks Gren Divisions, one to each regiment. By order of the Army they were activated in the Pz divisions for the offensive. They consisted of one assault, one engineer, and one reconnaissance platoon. They were equipped with "Sturmgewehr 44" but had no machineguns. The engineer platoon had explosives, detonation agents, and flame throwers. The reconnaissance, platoon was equipped with bicycles. The companies were composed of selected men, who got a special training.

At least once a week a battalion maneuver had to take place, in order to train each battalion commander in the

leading of his battalion.

Night maneuvers and training in orientation in the dark were especially stressed, likewise the camouflage of marching, fighting, and resting troops. In the shelter area accumulation of troops and vehicles had to be avoided, unless they were camouflaged.

Training in digging had to take place very often, in order to teach the men how to increase the effect of their fire by making a rest for the weapons, and how to limit that of the enemy fire according to the axiom that fighting and digging form an entity.

The infantry should be given a systematic march training, and during nightly rests the men should be taught how to improvise a protection against the inclemencies of the weather.

The leaders did their best not only to further the training of the troops but also to harden them. But at the same time the necessary rest and relaxation should be granted them.

The lack of fuel limited the possibilities of training considerably. March training could not be carried out, at least not to the necessary extent. Impossible to carry out were above all combat exercises of the units with tanks, and drill in cooperation of the assault guns with the mounted Pz Grenadiers or the infantry.

The practical training of the troops was supplemented by a theoretical one of officers and NCOs in map maneuvers. By this, intended combat exercises were carried out on a map with good results. Shortly before the beginning of the offensive certain phases of the tasks assigned to the units could be displayed on the map, by which valuable suggestions of the best way of carrying out the operations were made.

But the numerous limitations as regards time, terrain, and material rendered a systematic training impossible, and the excellent improvisations made by the commanders could not smooth out the deficiencies.

e. Final estimate of the fighting qualities of the units sent in.

I estimate the fighting qualities of the units sent in to be the following at the beginning of the attack:

The 66 Army Corps. The 18 Volks Gren Div. Suitable for attack. 90% of men and material freshened up.

The 62 Volks Gren Div. Not fully suitable for attack. 90% freshened up.

The 58 Pz Corps. The 560 Volks Gren Div. Newly activated, the fighting qualities of which could not be estimated beforehand. A great number of young men without any combat experience. 90% freshened up.

The 116 Pz Div. Very suitable for attack. 80% freshened up.

The 47 Pz Corps.

The 26 Volks Gren Div. Suitable for attack. 90% freshened up.

The 2 Pz Div. Very suitable for attack. 80% freshened up.

The Pz Lehr Div. Very suitable for attack. 90% freshened up.

Army Reserves / Fuehrer Escort Brigade. Very suitable for attack. Freshened up as regards men and material.

This estimate of the troops only concerns men, material, and morale, and it is not meant as an estimate of the skill and abilities of the men or their leaders. The behavior of the majority of the commanders, officers and men was excellent; they were keen on fighting, the march capacity of the infantry was good, the supply services worked well, and the medical corps personnel acted in an almost self-sacrificing way.

4. Measures for camouflage, deception, and the preservation of secrecy.

With a view to the element of surprise, the preservation of secrecy was decisive for a successful carrying out of our plans. The regulations were very strict in this respect, and we had to put up with all disadvantages which this involved for our preparations.

The briefing, therefore, only comprised the number of persons which was considered to the purpose during each phase of the preparations, and to each person was only given the information which was absolutely necessary for him to have in order to be able to carry out his task.

We only wrote down what was absolutely necessary to have in writing.

Camouflage, deception and the preservation of secrecy were consequently closely connected.

The principal means of preserving the secrecy was that the briefing was given at as late a moment as possible. It was echeloned.

First of all the following members of the Staff of the Army were briefed: The Commander in Chief and the Chief of Staff, but not their personal escort officers, the G3 and two special-missions staff officers and one clerk, who was to take care of the entire correspondence. The following persons were not briefed: the Oberquartiermeister, the G2, the Higher Artillery Commander, the engineer and signal commanders of the Army. As of the 25 Nov the circle was enlarged. The Commander in Chief of the Army was to make the decisions, and he had the responsibility.

The Commanding Generals and their Chiefs of Staff were initiated on the 23 - 25 November and the Division Commanders at the beginning of December.

II. The following measures were taken to achieve a strategic camouflage of the attack and with this a deception.

1. The Highest Command announced that it could be taken for granted that the enemy would continue his large-scale offensive in order to break through the West Wall, cross the Roer river, and advance on the Rhine on both sides of Cologne, further, he would probably extend his base of operations to the south as far as the area of the First American Army (about as far as Monschau) with the object of capturing the two dams and power stations, situated on the Urft river and north of Schleiden. In consequence of this, the reserves of the High Command of the Wehrmacht were to be moved into position behind the "B" Group of Armies. (These reserves consisted of newly activated and freshened up divisions from Germany, the 6 Pz Army, and a number of newly activated Volks Gren Divisions).

2. As we could expect the attack in the sector of the Twenty-first British Army Group to be continued at the same time or immediately after, a part of the reserves were assembled farther in the north almost as far as Krefeld.

3. The privileged freshening up, given the Pz and other divisions stationed west of the Rhine, was accounted for by the fact that the majority of them had already been engaged in this sector, and it was therefore probable that they would be sent in again in the first line of resistance.

4. The insertion and the preliminary employment of a new tactical party - and actually the "supposed" staff of the 25 Army, under Maj Gen Gause, worked later on according to directives given by the Commander in Chief in the West - was nothing unusual according to German principles of leadership, and it was often used in order to have on organization control a center of gravity. Consequently this was given credence, like all other deceptions mentioned above.

The supposed 25 Army was represented by small working parties and radio stations. Billets were made available to them, the roads of the billet areas got directions posts with feigned names; which were mentioned in the deceptive radio messages, transmitted by the 6 Pz Army.

5. As we could reckon with a continuation of the enemy attacks in the near future, an adequate supply of war material, motor fuel, and food rations had to be brought up as soon as possible. These movements were mainly carried out east of the Rhine to make this defensive measure look more probable. Even if such measures were bound to result in decisive delays during a successful operation we had better put up with it - according to the opinion of the High Command of the Wehrmacht. An adequate number of "Speer" transport columns were available in case the capacity of the railroads proved to be too small.

6. The Staff of the 5 Pz Army spread a rumor, telling that in the spring of the coming year we would launch an attack

through Trier east of the Moselle with the object of recapturing the district of Saar. The attack was to begin when we had finished the formation of new divisions and given the Pz units a complete freshening up. The rumor seemed probable to everybody, because the areas of assembly assigned to the 5 Pz Army and the 7 Army were placed in the area south of the Moselle, in order not to arouse the suspicion in the troops that they might be employed elsewhere. For reasons of deception a General Staff Officer, whose activities were well known by the Staff of the "G" Army Group, was actually sent to this Army Group to establish communication and carry out reconnaissance. He spent two days there.

7. Several times it was suggested and requested on the day of attack to contain parts of the western front at many different points. This could be done by means of preparations by fire, increased patrol activity, and numerous raids, carried out by strong forces.

8. The relief of the Army Staff, which had the control of the sector west of the Roer, took place by echelons. (The 15 Army relieved the 5 Pz Army). Until the day of attack the Staff of the 15 Army kept its actual name, whereas the Staff of the 5 Pz Army concealed its identity under the name of "Feldjaegerkommando zu besonderer Verfuegung."

III. The following measures of camouflage and deception were ordered and taken in the tactical area:

1. We were not permitted either to reinforce or change our patrol activity. As of about the 1 December it was cancelled in order to prevent PWs or deserters from jeopardizing our plans. Alsatians, Lorrainians, and Luxemburgers were withdrawn from the front as they, more than all others, could be suspected to desert to the enemy.

2. At the outset our attack troops had to leave reconnaissance out of consideration, because they were not initiated until a very late moment. But also after the initiation (as of the 15 Dec), which took place by echelons, only regimental commanders and above were permitted to reconnoiter, accompanied by an officer of the static divisions. For this, they and the officers of higher staffs had to possess an identification card, signed by the Commanding General. The static divisions and the units which arrived later on got the explanation that the Highest Command wanted to have some initiated units available as reserves.

3. When reconnoitering, the Commander in Chief of the Army and his officers did not wear their special uniforms but changed before they started.

4. Thanks to the numerous woods in the district of Eifel it was not difficult to camouflage the various sorts of vehicles and equipment, which could not be placed under shelter within the area.

5. Charcoal was issued, so that the smoke from the fires, over which they cooked their food, should not betray the presence of the troops.

6. A road service, supplied with sand, prime movers, and recovery equipment, was established at difficult points. The wrecked motor vehicles, tanks, artillery guns, etc., had to be sufficiently camouflaged, so that the enemy should not be able to draw any conclusions in case he discovered them.

7. The marking of the roads of march, or sideroads into shelter areas, as well as signs indicating shelters of troops, command posts, telephone and radio stations, etc. were strictly forbidden. The officer in charge of camouflage measures, the "road commanders," and the post commanders controlled within their spheres of authority that this order was carried out.

8. As a measure taken against deserters, the moving into jumpoff positions was arranged in such a way that the troops launched the attack after a short stay in the main line of resistance.

9. About 8 km behind the main line of resistance we fixed a limit beyond which motorized vehicles could not go. From there horsedrawn vehicles transported the artillery and antiaircraft artillery guns, ammunition, and bridge-building equipment to their emplacements.

10. During the last two nights preceding the attack we emplaced our artillery, antiaircraft artillery, and searchlights

while "noise camouflage" was produced by airplanes.

11. All fire activity extending the normal amount was forbidden as well as adjustment fire by artillery, smoke shell mortars, and heavy infantry weapons; the firing data of the batteries which were already emplaced had to be used.

The antiaircraft batteries, intended to support the attack, were strictly forbidden to fire before the attack, except in case they should be attacked by the enemy.

12. Each unit was to charge one of its officers with the control of all measures of passive air defense.

13. Marches, and preparations for same, were forbidden during the daylight hours; marches still unfinished at dawn had to be discontinued.

The tracks outside the roads had to be obliterated. (The artillery, therefore, was to some extent emplaced in the immediate vicinity of the roads).

During the daylight hours elements of the arriving units pretended to march to the north and the east.

14. All transmissions of communication by telephone or radio concerning the offensive were forbidden. Radio traffic was in no case permitted to exceed the normal extent.

15. During the last 14 days before the beginning of the attack feigned reports on a concentration of the supposed Staff of the 25 Army northeast of Aachen was transmitted by radio (cfr. par. 4 p. 1940).

16. The day of attack was not in the traditional way called "X-Day," but had another letter of the alphabet. The days preceding the day of attack were designated by a letter preceding in the alphabet. Thus if the day of attacked is called "K-Day," "E-Day" is five days before the attack. The designation for the same day according to the old system was "X-5 Day."

A special code was also fixed for the designation of time.

17. The camouflage names, chosen for our correspondance, differed in the correspondance between the "B" Group of Armies and the Commander in Chief in the West from those used between the "B" Group of Armies and the Armies or the Corps Headquarters, subordinate to them. The names were changed every 14 days. The system seems somewhat complicated, but in reality it is quite simple, since the offices only had to use two names for the same thing, one in the correspondance with superior commands and one in that with lower ones.

From the very beginning the strategic camouflage had the motto "Wacht am Rhein."

18. Not until the evening before the attack was the camouflage removed and the troops informed about the operation.

All these measures resulted in a complete preservation of the element of surprise. The enemy had not reckoned with an attack on such a scale and - what is decisive - in a terrain

offering such difficulties, especially for the Pz troops.

IV. The camouflage measures, however, caused numerous difficulties.

a. During the last two nights before the attack the troops had to leave their former shelters, which at the same time served as assembly areas for the offensive, and concentrate for action. In case they were employed in the first wave a relief of the static troops was involved too. The latter had to depart for their own jumpoff positions or assembly areas (the troops in the assembly areas were to be available for the local commander as reserves). This was true of elements of the 18 and 26 Volks Gren Divisions, who had to march long distances.

During two nights the troops were marched into their jumpoff positions, as shown in the first paragraph of chapter 4.

The march plan was made by the G3. It worked well and took all difficulties into consideration, as for instance, distances, the quality of the roads, timing, etc. I mention this in order to stress the fact that it is decisive that the General Staff works well, and that this work can only be perfect if it is based on experiences gained during practical service with the troops. A successful concentration of troops for action can only be achieved if the work of the G3 is successful. He had to solve almost all problems himself, because

only a very limited number of officers were initiated at that time. It can be said that his work was a complete success.

In spite of all, frictions could not be avoided. Some portions of the troops did not arrive early enough to relieve the static troops in time. The latter had to march into their jumpoff positions through an unknown terrain, they had to be rested there, briefed as to the terrain, and supplied.

In some cases the artillery and antiaircraft artillery did not find their emplacements, and some advanced observers did not find the artillery to which they were assigned. They arrived with delay.

These frictions, however, are not due to the march plan. They are explained by the fact that the war had lasted six years, and that the condition of horses, vehicles, and equipment did not meet the requirements.

Finally I want to point out that the decision not to move the troops forward until during the last two nights preceding the attack was up to the point, since everything had to be subordinated to the element of surprise. If we had had fresh troops and our level of mobility had been good - as the case was in the Allied armies - these difficulties would not have existed.

b. A slow course of affairs, since all messages, orders, etc. were to be transmitted by officers serving as couriers.

c. The extraordinary amount of work to be done by the small working parties of the superior headquarters.

d. The excessive demands on the horses, owing to increased use for the bringing up of artillery, antiaircraft guns, ammunition, motor fuel, equipment of all kinds and other things necessary for the troops.

V. The strict measures of camouflage and deception prevented.

a. An adequate control of our information about the enemy. (the organization of his area of security, troops, etc).

b. Complete information about the enemy in his positions at various times, about the quality of his strongpoints and outposts, the roads used by his relief detachments, reconnaissance patrols, contact patrols, etc.

c. A detailed briefing of the attack troops, above all the assault companies, as regards the terrain.

d. An expert control, carried out by engineers, of the water level and the banks of the Our river. Owing to high water these factors changed every day.

e. As I mentioned in para. 5 p.141, we stored our supplies along and east of the Rhine for purposes of camouflage and deception. These measures led to serious difficulties, and they were increased because the Oberquartiermeisters of the Army Group and the Armies got their directives too late, and consequently were unable to plan the bringing up

of supplies in advance.

The stores were placed along or even east of the Rhine. No disadvantages would have arisen from this if the troops had had an adequate supply of equipment and motor fuel. If sufficient transportation facilities had been available, we might have been able to bring up these supplies, when they were needed. But we did not have these facilities. The divisions did not dispose of sufficient column space for the transportation of supplies for the first days. Neither did the Quartiermeisters and Oberquartiermeisters dispose of vehicles enough to have the supplies follow the troops. In addition, the capacity of the railroads was very low owing to damages caused by the enemy air force, which especially attacked rails, bridges and stores.

The result was that the troops had to fetch their supplies far away, and the bringing up was decisively hampered when, as of the 22 Dec, even single motor vehicles could hardly travel on the roads during daylight hours.

MS # B-151

-a-

Supplement to III

- Operations plan: Of the Operations Section of the Wehrmacht.
- 1 Commitment of forces 1 Pz Corps in the first wave
1 Pz Corps in the second wave
- 2 Proportions 4 Pz Divisions
3 Infantry Divisions
- 3 Sequence of the attack:
Preparation by fire: 2 hours' barrage
Opening of fire: about 0800 hrs.
Start of attack: about 1030 hrs.
- Of the Army, as planned and actually carried out.
3 corps in the first line.
To the right
1 Inf Corps, in the middle
1 Pz Corps, to the left 1 Pz Corps.
One additional Inf Div was requested.
Subordinated were: 3½ Pz Divisions, 4 Inf Divisions.
Among them:
*
116 Pz Div 80% 18 VGD 90%
2 " " 80% 62 VGD 90%
Pz Lehr Div 90% 26 VGD 90%
Fhr. Begl. Brig: only 2/3 arrived
560 VGD: only 2/3 arrived.
- 10 - 20 minutes' preparation by fire at individual points.
Not before 0530 hrs.
"Infiltration" during the hours of darkness. Noiseless.

MS # B-151

-b-
Supplement to III.1.

- Operations plan: Of the Operations Section of the Wehrmacht. Of the Army, as planned and actually carried out.
- 4 Bridge-building: 3 - 4 hours.
- 5 Motor fuel: Requested: 5 V.S.**-Available on the 16 Dec: 1,5 - 2 V.S. on the 2 Dec promised by the Army: 10 Dec
Actually: 16 Dec.
Only $\frac{1}{2}$ brought up. Later on somewhat more for Bastogne.
- 6 Date: 26-28 Nov, 1,7,10 Dec.
- 7 Artillery and mortars: Advance detachments: during the night of the third day. The main body on the fourth day of the attack.
- 8 Best speed made: On the second day across the Maas.
- Reserves of the Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht: "a whole series", later on one Pz Div (the 11 or the 21 Divisions). In the sector of the Army:
One VGD; as of the 24 Dec the 9 Pz Div, and the 3 and 15 Pz Gren Divisions.
- *) The percentage of freshening up comprises personnel, material, and morale.
- **) V.S. means one issue of fuel needed for 100 km.

The History of the B Pz Army.

I The task of the Army.

II The object of the Ardennes Offensive:

Germany's military position on the Western Front at the beginning of December 1944.

The initial situation of Heeresgruppe B.

The aim and purpose of the planned offensive.

The prospects of the offensive as they were evaluated at various periods.

III The plan.

The plan of operations.

The available supplies of men and materials (including replacements, rest, supplies).

The terrain.

The measures taken to deceive the enemy.

The rail and road network.

IV The course of the offensive:

The breakthrough of the enemy positions.

The thrust up to, and across the Ourthe. The battle for St. Vith.

The thrust to the Maas

The battle for Bastogne.

Defense to the east of the Maas.

The retreat to our initial Positions.

V Conclusion.

Review.

Conclusions to be drawn.

Outline prepared by Gen Manteuffel

April 15, 1946.

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